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MICHAEL J FOX, CHRISTOPHER LLOYD & MORE REFLECT ON ITS AMAZING LEGACY

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- WES CRAVEN
- SHANNARA



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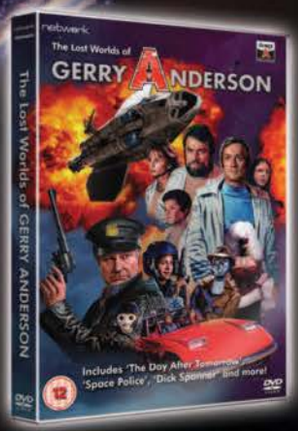


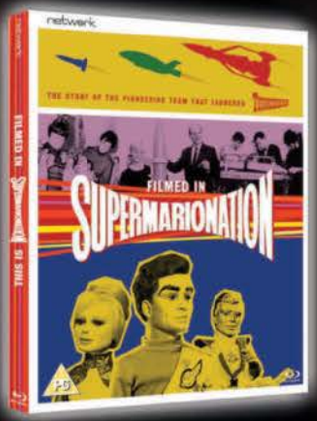
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On 21 October, Doc Brown and Marty McFly will touchdown in our time, only to find that the future isn't quite how they imagined it. There are no hoverboards; food dehydrators don't exist yet, and *Jaws 19* is still some way off.

However, one thing remains consistent with their present: people still love *Back To The Future*. Whether it's Marty hitting 88mph for the first time or young George McFly delivering the most signposted left hook in history, everyone has a favourite iconic moment from the series. With a few notable exceptions, few films have permeated the consciousness of moviegoers worldwide like Robert Zemeckis's masterpiece has.

And it's with this in mind that 30 years on, we check back in with the cast to discuss their experiences making the sci-fi classic and how it has changed their lives, as well as looking at the legacy it's left behind. You may think you know *Back To The Future*, and we're sure you do, but hopefully we've managed to throw a few curveballs in there for you!

But that's not the half of it. Gracing our cover once again are messrs Queen and Allen, leading *Arrow* and *The Flash* into new seasons and a new era as all-star team-up *Legends Of Tomorrow* draws ever closer – and we have exclusive cast and creator interviews to discern exactly what on Earth 2 is going on.

Also inside, we talk to all-round geek legend Guillermo del Toro about *Crimson Peak*, his gothic-infused foray into haunted-house melodrama; get the lowdown from those in the know about Ridley Scott's *The Martian*, and obtain insider access on the new seasons of small-screen juggernauts *The Walking Dead*, *Agents Of SHIELD* and *Gotham*.

We hope you have as much fun reading it as we did putting it together.

Steve

Steve Wright
Deputy Editor

GET EXCITED ABOUT THE WITCH

When was the last time a movie trailer truly scared you? *Really* shook you up? Not long ago it would have taken us a while to think up an answer for that one, but having seen the first footage for newbie director Robert Eggers' *The Witch*, we're still too spooked to think straight. Taking place in 17th Century New England, a family is torn apart after their young son disappears, with the parents (dependable British character actors Ralph Ineson and Kate Dickie) suspecting their unfortunate daughter Thomasin (newcomer Anya Taylor-Joy) of witchcraft. Having already come in for critical acclaim at Sundance Film Festival, and due to play at this year's BFI London Film Festival, we can't wait for this.



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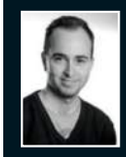
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MEET THE TEAM

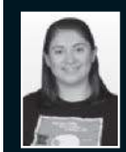
Q. What is your favourite moment from the *BTTF* trilogy?



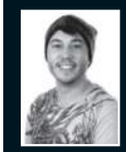
Steve Wright
Deputy Editor
A. George knocking out Biff
Heavily signposted, but oh so sweet.



Jonathan Hatfull
Features Editor
A. First DeLorean test
"When this baby hits 88mph, you're going to see some serious shit."



Poppy-Jay Palmer
Senior Staff Writer
A. "It's like I'm kissing... my brother"
Any time Lorraine hits on Calvin Klein.



Marcus Faint
Art Editor
A. That guitar solo
Marty McFly, a guitar, prom night – need I say more?



Jen Neal
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A. First time they time travel
It resonated with me as a kid and remained.

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Your essential, trustworthy and unrivalled guide to the latest genre happenings



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Get your first look at Gareth Edwards' Star Wars spinoff

The team-ups for Captain America: Civil War have finally been revealed...

WORDS **POPPY-JAY PALMER**

After much speculation regarding who will be supporting who in *Captain America: Civil War*, a batch of artwork was posted by *ComicBookMovie* that confirmed details of the team-ups. Unfortunately, the images were quickly taken down, so you'll either have to find them yourself or use your imagination. But we can still discuss the parties present.

No matter what your opinions are on the players, just remember what the game is: Iron Man (Robert Downey Jr) is fighting for the Superhero Registration Act, and Captain America (Chris Evans) is fighting for freedom. In the red corner (Iron Man, obviously), we have: War Machine (Don Cheadle), Black Widow (Scarlett Johansson), Black Panther (Chadwick Boseman) and the Vision (Paul Bettany). In the blue corner (Cap) is: Hawkeye (Jeremy Renner), Ant-Man (Paul Rudd), Agent 13 (Emily VanCamp), Falcon (Anthony Mackie) and Bucky Barnes (Sebastian Stan).

War Machine and the Vision's stances both make sense. Rhodey has been friends with Stark for years, so of course he's going to side with him. The Vision could also be nowhere else after living a digital life as JARVIS. It's nice to see Black Panther too. Since his film won't be released for another three years, *Civil War* will be T'Challa's first Marvel outing, and hopefully we'll get to know him a bit better before jumping into Wakanda.

Black Widow is a bit less black and white. After her liaisons with Steve Rogers and Sam Wilson in *The Winter Soldier*, as well as the fact that *Age Of Ultron* closed with her at Steve's side inside SHIELD HQ, something must have really kicked off to make her side with Tony. Natasha will also be fighting against her close friend Hawkeye, which again, is a little strange.

Team Captain America is more understandable. Though it hasn't been stated in the films yet, we're presuming that Agent 13, aka Sharon Carter, is a relation of Peggy, and anyone of Peggy's linage would be besmirching her name if they were to side with anyone but Steve. We didn't see too much of her in *The Winter Solider*, but Sharon's inclusion in artwork this early on suggests she could be getting a larger role. As for Sam Wilson, he'd be besmirching the name of Sam Wilson if he didn't side with Steve.

Bucky Barnes has had a very on-off relationship with Steve. First they're BFFs, next they're enemies, then Steve has Bucky hauled up in an underground workshop. Bucky's presence on Team Cap suggest that he and Steve are back to being pals again. Maybe not BFFs, but they can work on that.

Like Black Widow, Hawkeye is trickier to explain. Not much has happened between the pair of them to suggest he'd be on the side of freedom and liberty over the side of Stark. Whatever went down with him and Natasha could probably break families apart.

Standing on Hawkeye's shoulder is Ant-Man, who also (so far), aside from having a brief scrap with Falcon, has no reason for being there. Maybe he flipped a coin to decide. But he's also an ex-criminal, and registering as a superhero could mess up his crime grooves.

If you've been paying attention, you'll notice the teams aren't even. Six on five hardly seems fair, but Stark has the Vision and Cap has Hawkeye, so you know...

What is peculiar is the lack of Scarlet Witch (Elizabeth Olsen). We'll forgive Spider-Man's absence this early on – Tom Holland deserves his own big reveal – but it seems strange that Wanda Maximoff hasn't shown up to the party, especially given that she appeared to be working with Cap at the end of *Age Of Ultron*. She even got a new supersuit and everything. The only explanation is that she could be becoming the villain again. Or not. So many questions, not enough answers. Absence aside, it's understandable that she would be fighting on the blue team alongside Hawkeye, who became her buddy at the Battle of Sokovia.

Other heroes playing truant include Thor, who to be honest, doesn't seem the type to be on anyone's side but Asgard's, and Hulk, who is probably off relaxing somewhere warm.

Captain America: Civil War will be released in cinemas on 29 April 2016.



***Captain America: Civil War* will see Steve Rogers and Tony Stark on opposing sides.**



Scott Lang (Paul Rudd) will make his first appearance post-*Ant-Man*.



Emily VanCamp returns as Agent 13.



This time, Bucky will fight the good fight.

#TeamIronMan or #TeamCap?

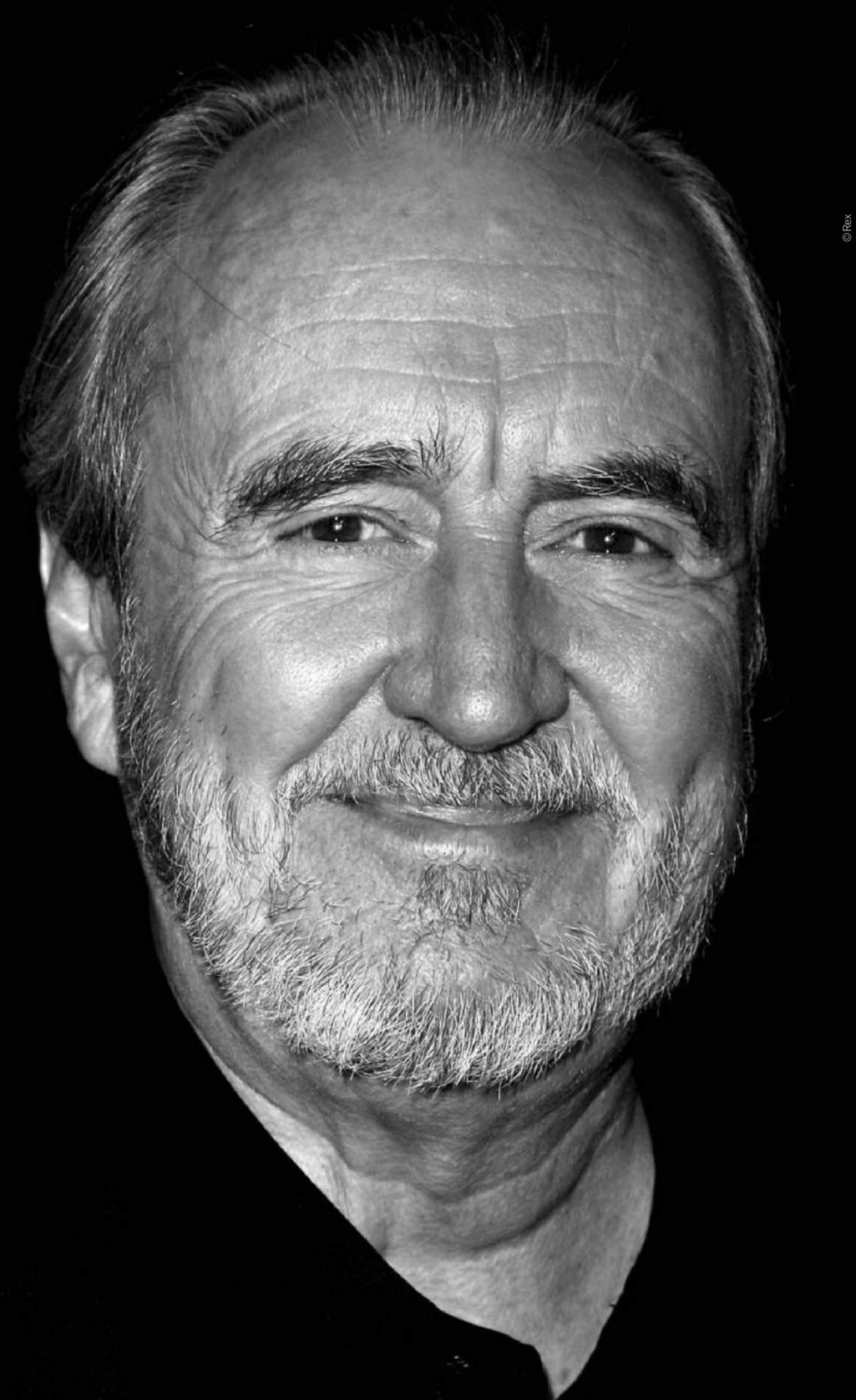
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WES CRAVEN 1939-2015

We celebrate the life of the horror icon in his own words

WORDS **OLIVER PFEIFFER**



©Rex

I remember as a child asking my mother to come into my dream because I was so afraid," Wes Craven told us in an interview in 2014. "'Honey, that's the one place I can't come with you,' she said. That to me was a profound realisation – the ultimate realisation – that you're going to die alone one way or another."

Sadly, a year on from that interview, the horror maestro succumbed to that very scenario when he lost his recent battle with brain cancer.

Through cinema, Craven was able to tap into our deepest and most primal fears. With his gritty and profoundly provocative debut *The Last House On The Left* (1972), the filmmaker unflinchingly depicted the torture, rape and murder of two women by a gang of psychopaths. It made the audience feel uneasily complicit. But the real clincher came with the equally grisly vengeance inflicted by one of the victims' parents upon the perpetrators.

Five years later, Craven's *The Hills Have Eyes* utilised its deserted wasteland locale to explore similar turf, with alternative bouts of inventively merciless retaliation to further suggest what humans could be capable of when pushed to extremes. After an adaptation of DC Comics' *Swamp Thing* (1982), Craven finally delivered a decisive crowd-pleaser by introducing the world to razor-fingered fiend Freddy Krueger in *A Nightmare On Elm Street* (1984).

"It went into a world that was universally experienced," he reflected, regarding its widespread success. "Sleep is usually in darkness, when you're exhausted and you don't have any control over what your mind and subconscious is going to be exposed to or show you when you're sleeping. That can be profoundly disturbing."

A decade on, with *Wes Craven's New Nightmare*, the writer-director innovatively subverted the scenario by suggesting what would happen if Freddy's fear was universally suppressed and how he might manifest in real life to retaliate against his creators.

A full-on meta-induced concept was embraced with Craven's chilling 1996 postmodern comeback *Scream*. Famously refreshing the slasher flick sub-genre, the classic featured horror-movie-savvy characters and a now iconic Edvard Munch masked whodunit killer. It led to three Craven-helmed sequels and a recent spinoff TV series, which he executive-produced. Let's salute the great master of cinematic nightmares by celebrating five of his most definitive films...



The Last House On The Left *(1972)*
Makes the audience feel complicit in its climatic reckoning.



The Hills Have Eyes *(1977)*
Uneasily reveals that we are all capable of gruesome violence.



A Nightmare On Elm Street *(1984)*
Cemented Craven's reputation as a modern horror master.



Wes Craven's New Nightmare *(1994)*
This postmodern gem is arguably his most underrated film.



Scream *(1996)*
"What's your favourite scary movie?" What a meta-induced question, and what an opener.

HAMMER SCRIPT HAS RISEN FROM THE GRAVE

Mayhem Film Festival hosts unmade Dracula script live-read

WORDS **JONATHAN HATFULL**

The Mayhem Film Festival in Nottingham has uncovered a special treat for genre fans this year. You can see a live-read of an unmade a Hammer *Dracula* script, *The Unquenchable Thirst Of Dracula*.

"It's very much got the feel of a classic *Dracula* story," enthuses festival co-director Steven Sheil, although it takes the Count to an entirely new environment. "The setting is India," he explains. "It's got a young English heroine travelling to India to investigate the disappearance of her sister, and the last thing she heard from her was this letter talking about this mysterious man that she'd met."

The script was unearthed at the Hammer Horror archive at the De Montford University, and Sheil tells us that it falls into the Christopher Lee era. "In the archive there are all these folders with scripts in, but the scripts aren't necessarily dated," he tells us. "What we've been able to piece together is that it was written after *Scars Of Dracula*. So we're talking late Sixties, early Seventies. It was at the time when Christopher Lee was playing Dracula, and it's very hard to imagine anybody else apart from him playing it."

The parts for the live read had not been cast at the time of writing, but Hammer historian Jonathan Rigby will serve as narrator. "It's a bit of a leap into the unknown for us, because we haven't done anything like this before," Sheil explains. "We've called it Screenless Cinema, which is a bit of an oxymoron obviously, but we very much want the script to come through and Anthony Hinds' descriptions and dialogue to come alive."

Mayhem Film Festival takes place on 15-18 October at Broadway, Nottingham. For more information, visit www.broadway.org.uk/mayhem.





Mayhem will host a live read of Hammer's *The Unquenchable Thirst Of Dracula*.

"HORROR IS A BASTARD GENRE AND I STAND BY IT!"

Indie figurehead Larry Fessenden on the state of modern horror

WORDS **JONATHAN HATFULL**



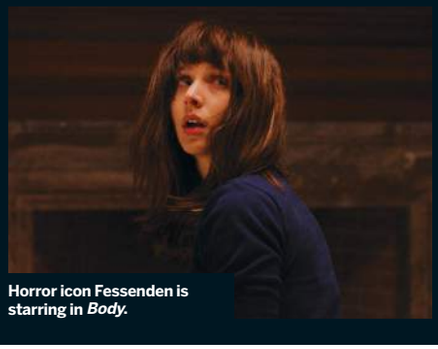
Larry Fessenden is one of the most important figures in indie cinema. He directed *The Last Winter*, and worked as a producer for filmmakers like Ti West and Kelly Reichardt, but if you've seen him on screen, chances are he's getting murdered. "They want me to be someone who gets killed right away!" he laughs.

We're talking about Dan Berk and Robert Olsen's *Body*, in which Fessenden plays a caretaker who stumbles upon three girls who have broken into a mansion, and suddenly he's in a heap at the bottom of the stairs. "What interests me in horror is to ground the film in something very naturalistic and you really become engaged with these people. Then when something goes wrong, it's more harrowing. I prefer it to creep in, the way it would in real life."

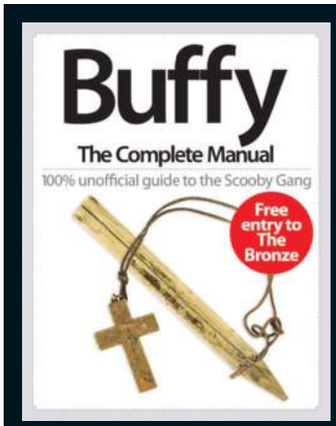
Fessenden is optimistic about the state of the genre. "We're in a good place with indie movies like *The Babadook*. You want someone to take chances, and unfortunately the studio gets hooked into something that's working."

He's got no problem with being labelled a horror filmmaker. "I'm very proud of it," he enthuses. "It's a bastard genre and I stand by it. I think the world is a frightening place, and people should be shocked out of their complacency."

Body is available to buy on DVD and VOD now.



Horror icon Fessenden is starring in *Body*.



BUFFY: THE COMPLETE MANUAL

Sink your teeth into our guide to the Scooby Gang

In every generation there is a chosen one. She alone will stand against the vampires, demons and the forces of darkness. She is the Slayer. And you can read all about her right now. From the creators of SciFiNow comes our **Complete Manual** of the series that made Joss Whedon's name: *Buffy The Vampire Slayer*.

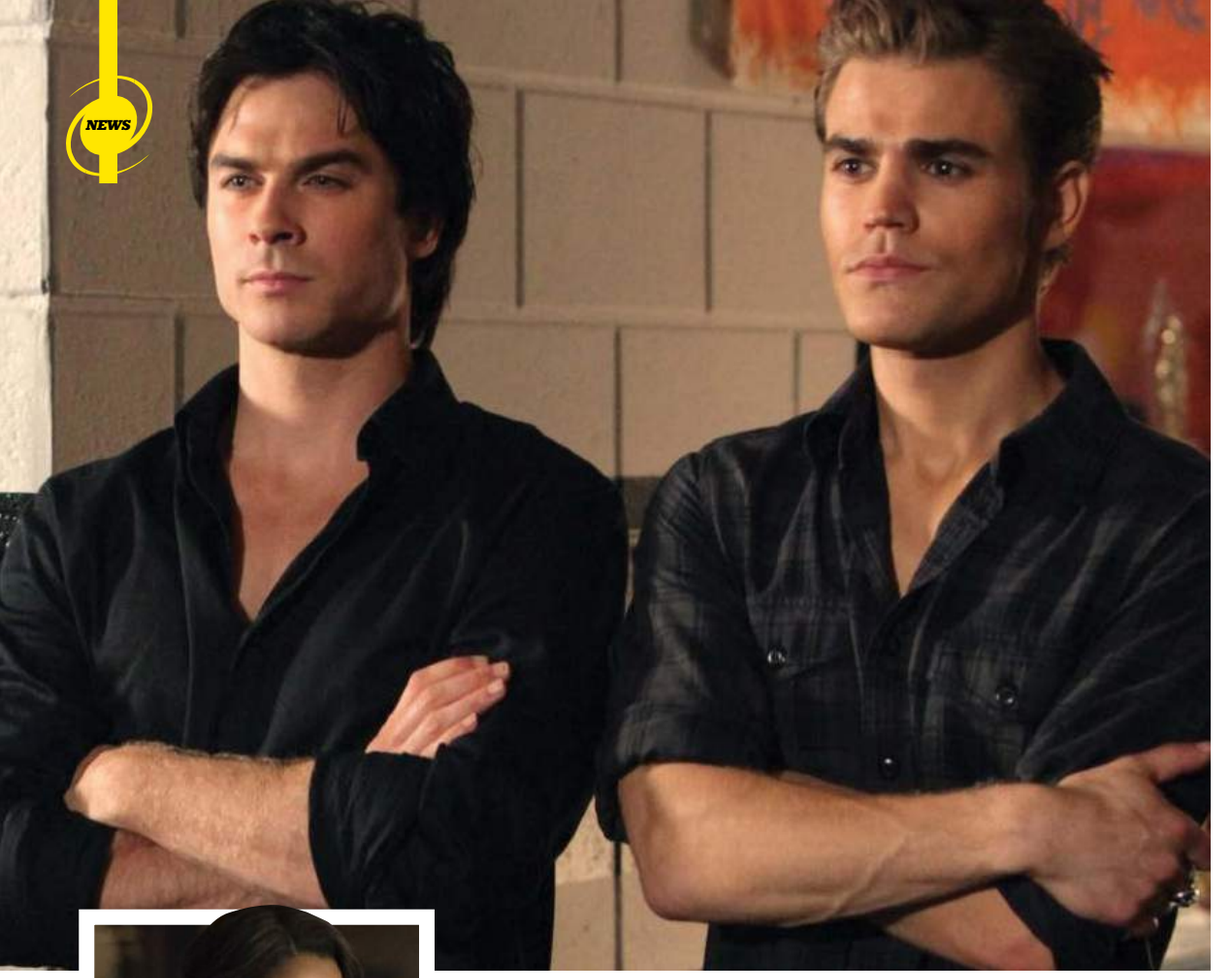
Inside, we talk to the stars of the show about how it went from a flop movie to one of the most beloved TV shows of all time, and take a look back with Whedon himself at how it all began.

And that's not all. We also reflect on the success of the spin-off show *Angel*, and delve into Whedon's back catalogue to handpick his best episodes.

For a fittingly fun and in-depth guide to one of fantasy's most beloved heroines, get **Buffy: The Complete Manual** now.

Fantasy and science fiction fans can also get their hands on Complete Manuals to **Harry Potter**, **Battlestar Galactica**, **Stargate**, **Firefly**, **Star Trek** and **Star Wars**, as well as a whole collection of horror eBooks, which include comprehensive guides to **Stephen King**, **Slasher Movies**, **Hammer** and **Kaiju Horror** and more!

Buffy: The Complete Manual is available to download for £2.29 from GreatDigitalMags.com.





VAMPIRE DIARIES SEASON 7 IS "MUCH MORE DANGEROUS"

Kat Graham on life after Elena and why this is a different kind of Vampire Diaries

WORDS **JONATHAN HATFULL**

We knew that *The Vampire Diaries* Season Six would be our farewell to Nina Dobrev's Elena Gilbert. This being *The Vampire Diaries*, however, it wouldn't be a season finale without a bombshell. With Elena buried so Bonnie (Kat Graham) could live, everyone is reeling. Oh, and Alaric (Matt Davis) saw his new (pregnant with twins) wife brutally murdered. And what about that time jump, where we saw Damon (Ian Somerhalder) and Matt (Zach Roerig) in a seemingly deserted Mystic Falls?

When we ask Graham for details about Season Seven, the star behind the show's ever-stronger witch is understandably cagey, but tells us that we can look forward to an intriguing new trio forming. "Well, the first episode opens up with [Bonnie] and Damon and Alaric on this road trip," she teases. "You're going to see a lot of different time lapses and flashes and things like that happening in the show, which is very cool. They haven't been to Mystic Falls yet, so you get to uncover with them what the town looks like when they return, without Elena."

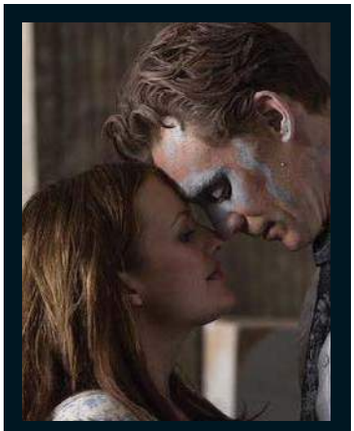
As the show's lead, everyone had a relationship with Elena, whether it was friend, family or lover. Excitingly, Graham tells us that there's not much time for moping. "Everyone has a bit more of a take-no-shit attitude," she explains "Especially Damon and Bonnie, who are much more similar in personality, much more confrontational than they were. You'll see Bonnie start to pick up on some Damon-isms. They both lost somebody who was important to them, and they have to deal with the loss together."

Understandably, the on-set dynamic has changed somewhat without Dobrev around. "It's a little strange, I'm not going to lie," Graham tells us. "It definitely feels different, the energy is different without her there. She's very much missed. But the dynamic that it's created, it really forces this show to be about the ensemble cast. Everyone has these missions that they have to accomplish and things they have to get done."

The focus of those missions? That would be Damon and Stefan's wicked mother Lily and her band of Heretics (vampire witches). "I will say that they're not who you would expect," laughs Graham. "And [Lily] is just such an interesting character. She can be smarter and quicker than all of us, and just because you think you've outsmarted her… she consistently comes back with a vengeance at every turn."

Those surprises will be coming thick and fast, as Graham promises a season you won't want to miss. "You're going to see a much more action-packed, dangerous season. It's definitely a different kind of *Vampire Diaries*, and it's a very cool one."

The Vampire Diaries returns to ITV2 this autumn.



59TH BFI LONDON FILM FESTIVAL

Find out what's showing and how to get tickets

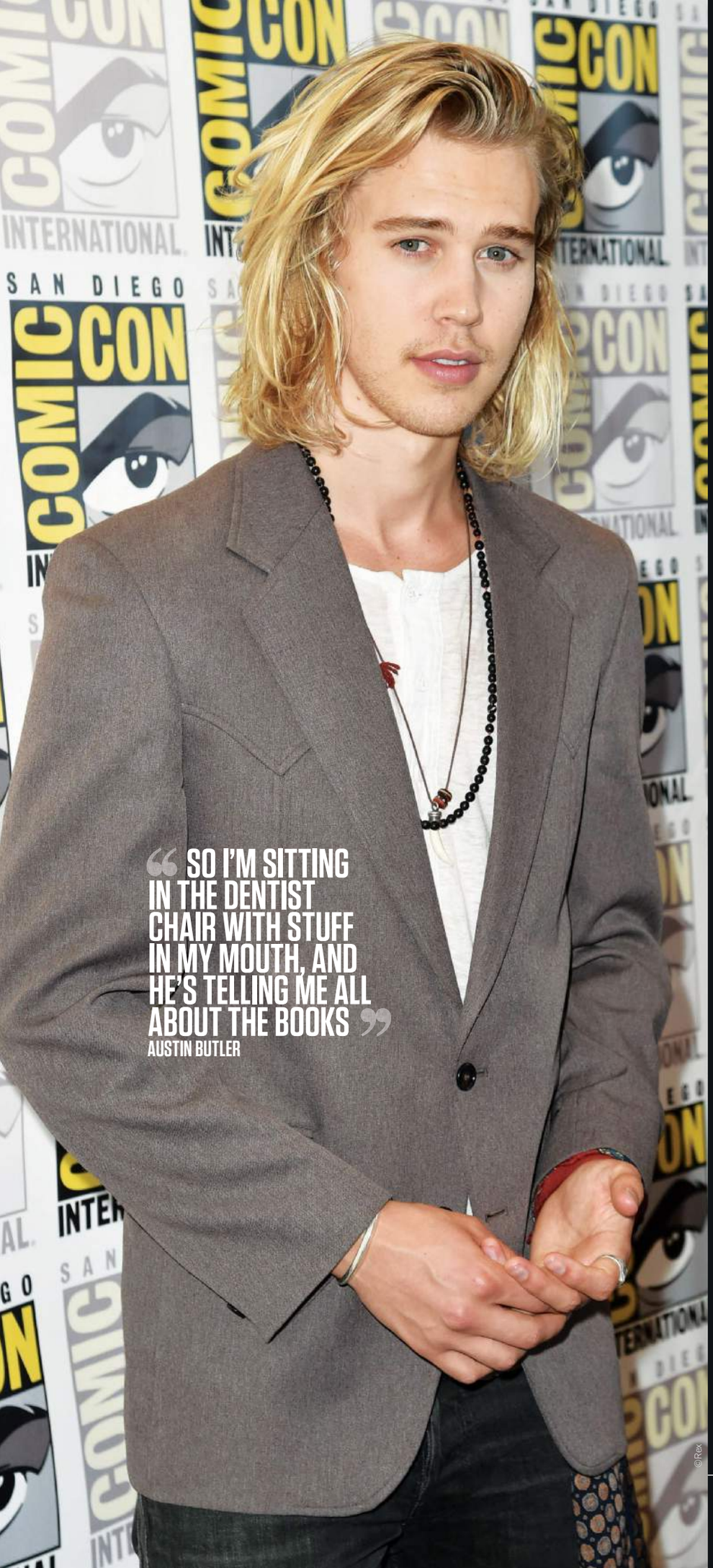
The 59th annual BFI London Film Festival is coming in strong this year with an exciting selection of films from the sci-fi, fantasy and horror world.

Headlining the festival is Ben Wheatley's *High-Rise*, starring Tom Hiddleston and Elisabeth Moss. Based on JG Ballard's novel, Hiddleston plays Dr Robert Laing, the resident of the 25th floor of a luxury tower block that descends into chaos.

If the supernatural is more your speed, check out Robert Eggers' *The Witch*. This spooky 17th century-set horror follows a devout Christian family as their youngest child goes missing, with sorcery and hysteria taking a toll on the group. Also, get a first look at *Goosebumps*, based on RL Stine's bestselling children's novels.

Along with the big features, enjoy cult titles like Hideo Nakata's *Ghost Theatre*, Jeremy Saulnier's horror *Green Room*, Jon Spira's *Star Wars*-inspired documentary *Elstree 1976* and Takashi Miike's vampire action-fantasy *Yakuza Apocalypse*. Other genre films include *Bone Tomahawk*, *The Boy*, *The Invitation* and *What We Become*.

The BFI London Film Festival will run from 7-18 October. For tickets to the festival, telephone 020 7928 3232, book online at www.bfi.org.uk/lff or visit the BFI Southbank Office.



> "SO I'M SITTING IN THE DENTIST CHAIR WITH STUFF IN MY MOUTH, AND HE'S TELLING ME ALL ABOUT THE BOOKS"
> AUSTIN BUTLER

© Rex

FIVE THINGS WITH AUSTIN BUTLER

The future Wil Ohmsford is discovering Shannara along with the rest of us

WORDS **EDWARD GROSS**

1 Identifying himself

"I play Wil Ohmsford," explains Austin Butler, who previously starred in *Arrow*, and will play an integral role in MTV's Terry Brooks adaptation *The Shannara Chronicles*. "Wil is a farm boy who has never been more than five miles outside of his village. In the beginning of the story, all he can think about is protecting his mum – she's very sick, and he just wants her to get better. He thinks that his place in the world is to become a healer, and that's what will give him security. While he's on a journey to become a healer, he gets pulled off that journey by Allanon, this Druid, who reveal that his ancestors were kings and warriors."

2 Death by training

Judging by what we've seen so far, there will be action sequences aplenty. In preparation, Butler and the rest of the cast were put through the mill. "Our trainer, Josh Randall, just annihilated us in the gym to the point where you're just shaking coming out, and throwing up," he recalls. "That was difficult, but it was the kind of thing where he's such a great guy that I still wanted to be around him. I wanted to hang out in the gym all the time with him. We got to have about three weeks of prep… doing that, and horseback riding, sword fighting and stunt training."

3 Having faith

"In our roles as actor, while we are seen on screen, we don't have power in the way of directing or editing or the CGI or anything," says Butler on the challenges of acting in front of green screen. "You're just hoping that it's going to look good and you can only do your best. It's like painting a mural from two inches away: You can't tell what it's going to look like. Seeing the teaser trailer and the scope of it all gave me chills."

4 Welcome to Shannara

"I hadn't read the books," recalls Austin on how he became involved, "but when I first met with the guys – Al Gough, Miles Millar and our director Jonathan Liebsman – I had a dentist appointment the next day and I told him, 'I just met with people on this thing called *Shannara*,' and he goes, 'I read those in second grade.' He was so excited. So I'm sitting in the chair with stuff in my mouth, and he's telling me all about the books. That was my first experience, then I got the book and started reading *The Elfstones Of Shannara*. That was my experience with the subject up to that time, and then getting to meet Terry Brooks was so cool. [Being] able to ask, 'When you created this character, where were you in your life? How did you see him?' It's so cool to me."

5 Words of wisdom

Of Butler's co-stars John Rhys-Davies, who counts *Raiders Of The Lost Ark* and *The Lord Of The Rings* among his many credits, he says, "He said to always try to keep your props. He kept the props from *Lord Of The Rings*, and he's very happy that he did. He said to make friends with the on-set photographer – he got some great photos of himself with his axe. Those are the things you don't think about… You think, 'Oh, I don't have time for pictures.' Aside from that, he'll all of a sudden start quoting Shakespeare and these soliloquies that just go on and on, and you're saying, 'Wow, this guy has got all this in his brain.' It's incredible."

The Shannara Chronicles will air on MTV in the US in January 2016, with a UK air date to follow.



5 THINGS WE'VE LEARNED ABOUT STAR WARS

From Force Awakens to Rogue One, here's what's new in the world that Lucas built...

WORDS STEVE WRIGHT

1 The Rogue One cast is absolutely brilliant

We'd all heard mutterings about who was involved with Gareth Edwards' spinoff *Rogue One*, but having seen the first picture of the principal cast together, we can safely say that they look the part. Felicity Jones, Diego Luna, Riz Ahmed, Donnie Yen and Jiang Wen all look suitably serious in rebel attire (with fellow cast members Alan Tudyk, Ben Mendelsohn, Forest Whitaker and Mads Mikkelsen out of shot), and the first spinoff now seems that bit more real.

It will take place between *Revenge Of The Sith* and *A New Hope*, and concerns the Rebels attempting to steal the plans for the first Death Star. Now referred to as *Rogue One: A Star Wars Story* (as opposed to the original 'Star Wars Anthologies' prefix), the Force is strong in this one indeed.

2 Colin Trevorrow will direct Episode IX

Unsurprising revelation of the year: when you direct a film that goes on to be one of the highest-grossing of all time, you become hot property. This has certainly come true in the case of *Jurassic World*'s Colin Trevorrow, who has been chosen to pick up where JJ Abrams and Rian Johnson will leave off. In a statement, Trevorrow said: "This is not a job or an assignment. It is a seat at a campfire surrounded by an extraordinary group of storytellers, filmmakers, artists and craftspeople. We've been charged with telling new stories for a younger generation because they deserve what we all had a mythology to call their own."

3 The Force Awakens still looks amazing

As *Episode VII* draws closer, we're getting more and more pieces of information. From the first official photo of Domhnall Gleeson's General Hux and the news that Andy Serkis would be playing Emperor-esque Supreme Leader Snoke, to the revelation of Adam Driver's Kylo Ren being part of an ominous-sounding Order called the 'Knights of Ren' (he's not a Sith, as many expected), the mysteries of the new trilogy are getting de-shrouded. We haven't had a proper look at Luke or Leia yet, but we're sure that's only a matter of time.

Oh, and John Boyega knows how to use a bloody lightsaber!

4 The videogames are upping the ante

D23 gave us another look at in-game footage for DICE's new *Battlefront* instalment, this time from the Tatooine level, depicting a group of outnumbered Rebels attempting to survive as Admiral Ackbar barks out orders over the intercom. The attention to detail is simply incredible: from the Star Destroyer hovering ominously in the background, to a jetpack-wearing Stormtrooper veering out of control after being shot, everything about this just feels exactly like it should, capturing the sense of control that those who played the original games will remember.

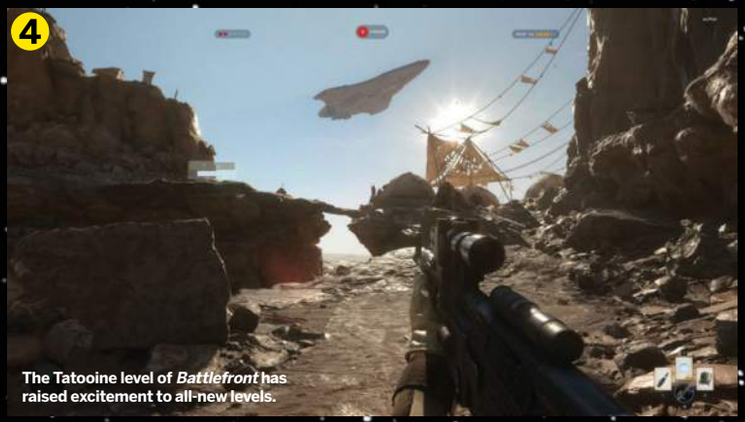
But there's more. Disney's sandbox playhouse *Infinity 3.0* has added an all-new *Star Wars* world. Coupled with confirmation that John Boyega and Daisy Ridley would both be voicing their *Force Awakens* characters, Finn and Rey, in a future instalment in the game, and the future's looking especially exciting on that front.

5 Star Wars will become the new DisneyWorld

Disney is capping off its Lucasfilm investment by announcing plans for two all-new theme parks based on *Star Wars*. A Millennium Falcon ride has been confirmed, in addition to another that will pitch attendees into the thick of a space battle. Interestingly, it will also be populated by staff members in character as denizens of the *Star Wars* universe, as well as "fantastic roaming beasts".

Speaking at D23, Disney chief executive Bob Iger said, "We're creating a jaw-dropping new world that represents our largest single theme land expansion ever. Nothing in the land will be out of character or stray from the mythology."

Star Wars: The Force Awakens will be released in cinemas on 18 December 2015, while *Rogue One: A Star Wars Story* will be out on 16 December 2015.



4 The Tatooine level of *Battlefront* has raised excitement to all-new levels.



The *Disney Infinity: Star Wars* starter pack also caught the eye.



1



3



2

STAR TOURS

We came up with some ideas for potential rides at the new Star Wars theme parks



Jar Jar Binks Underwater Safari

The Gungan goon leads a troupe of tourists on a tour of Naboo's lakelands. The idiot strays off course and into Opee sea killer territory, leading the riders on a frenetic race for their lives, culminating in a photo finish as they reach the port of Theed. Riders discretion: you might get wet.



AT-ST Endor Assault

A fast and frantic 3D experience that lets you take to the cockpit of the eponymous chicken walker and blast as many ewoks as you can. The more you end, the higher your score gets, which you can tot up at the end of the ride. You lose points if a renegade wookiee manages to hijack you.



Ride the Death Star

Take a rollercoaster into the very heart of the Death Star, evading TIE Fighters and tight corridors as you go. Having climbed a steep slope to the core, experience the rush of saving the galaxy as you spiral out into the open space while it detonates behind you. Then do it all over again.



All-new *Star Wars* theme parks are planned to open in Orlando and Anaheim.

5

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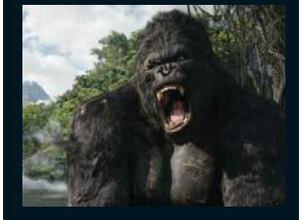
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COSPLAY OF THE MONTH

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TINY TINA (BORDERLANDS 2)

COSPLAYER: SU HADDRELL **FROM:** WORCESTER, UK **TWITTER:** @CHERRYBOMB1618

1 THE CHARACTER

My boyfriend and I are really big fans of the game *Borderlands*, and when *Borderlands 2* was released, Tiny Tina became my favourite character. She's childish, quick-witted and loves big guns and bigger explosions – what is there not to love? I'm four foot ten, so I like to play small characters, and Tina fits my personality very well – I love action movies with big explosions, and I also play a lot of *Airsoft*, which invariably involves big guns.

2 THE COSTUME

The rocket launcher was the most fun to make. It was built from corrugated card and hot glue, covered in papier-mâché and then painted in acrylic. I started the costume from the shoes up by studying images and sourcing as much as I could from eBay. The rest was sewn together from charity-shop fabrics and then painted with acrylic. The mask on the side of the wig was the hardest, as I have a small head! My boyfriend sculpted it for me and I painted it. The make-up and contact lenses bring the whole thing to life.

3 THE DESIGN

For me, cosplay is about studying the character and matching textures and colours as closely as you can (with the cheapest materials possible!). I bought an orange pair of trousers and then adapted them by cutting the legs off at the knee, sewing on brown fabric panels and then painting on the 'cel shading' effect to make them look cartoony. The rocket launcher is based on a *Borderlands* Torgue design, but I took some liberties with the paintwork to make it more 'Tina'.

4 THE ACCESSORIES

Tina wears a pair of scissors attached to a small rucksack, a couple of pouches, along with a hunting knife and some dynamite. I went full 'Blue Peter' and cut the shapes of the scissors and knife from card. I made the dynamite out of jellybean tubes. The pouches and rucksack were made from charity shop pleather skirts. I also studied other cosplayers to learn how to do my makeup. I even bought a plaster and painted it white so I could wear it. I may have got a little obsessed with detail!

TRIVIA AT VARIOUS POINTS, *BORDERLANDS 2* REFERENCES DC CHARACTERS BLUE BEETLE AND GREEN LANTERN.


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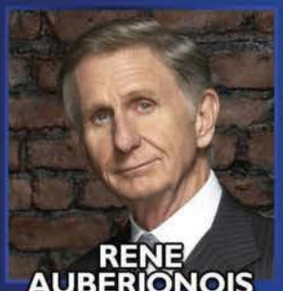
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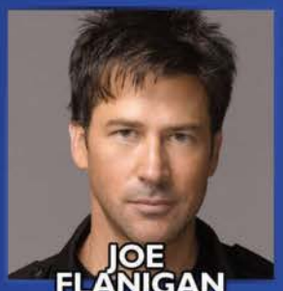
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HEROES ON INFINITE EARTHS

WITH NEW SEASONS OF ARROW AND THE FLASH ON THE WAY AND LEGENDS OF TOMORROW UP AHEAD, THE CW IS BLAZING AN UNSTOPPABLE TRAIL OF SUPERHERO STARDUST. WE SPOKE TO THE PRODUCERS AND CAST ABOUT HOW ITS FLAGSHIP SHOWS WILL VENTURE EVEN FURTHER OUTSIDE THE BOX...

WORDS **EDWARD GROSS**

IN THE CLIFFHANGER SEASON FINALE OF THE FLASH, SPEEDSTER BARRY ALLEN BROKE THE TIME BARRIER AND, IN THE PROCESS, TRIGGERED A SINGULARITY THAT THREATENED the world. Coming into the show's second season, it would seem to be pretty obvious that Barry will be able to return things to normal. But what he can't undo – no matter how fast he runs – is the impact he's had on the DC TV landscape.

For starters, ratings for *The Flash* have actually been higher than *Arrow*, the series that spawned it, and that success – couple with a ratings-breaking *Flash/Arrow* crossover – has led to the creation of a forthcoming additional spin-off, *Legends Of Tomorrow*, and has even played a role in the launch of *Supergirl*.

But even those things pale in comparison to the fact that the success of *The Flash* seems to have resulted in *Arrow*'s Oliver Queen not only admitting that he's happy in that show's season finale, but allowing him to actually smile.

What the hell is going on? Does that mean in Season Four we're going to see a lighter approach taken to life in Starling City? Will everybody be kind of lightening up? Don't count on it.

"I'm actually glad you brought that up," enthuses *Arrow* executive producer Marc Guggenheim. "We ended last year of *Arrow* with Oliver in an emotional place that we always intended to bring him to. Now, of course, everyone is just going to think we're making the show into *Flash*. I think when people watch Season Four, they'll see that Oliver is happy and he's in a more evolved place, and he's just not the same."

Stephen Amell, who portrays Queen, aka the soon-to-be-christened Green Arrow, concurs. "The first three seasons," he offers, "closed a chapter for Oliver. He made the decision to walk away from it all. It doesn't get any more profound and final than that. It doesn't mean that he can't come back, but he was defined by the hooded vigilante persona, which as we saw in Season Two the first time he put on that hood, that version – the killer version, the remorseless version, the one that wanted to do everything on his own because any time he trusted someone, that person turned against him or split aside from him – is gone. He can't exist anymore. So even if Oliver encounters dire circumstances – and it is our show, so he will, almost immediately – he will handle them in a different way."

As far as Grant Gustin is concerned, his alter ego of Barry Allen/The Flash has gone through tremendous changes as well as a result of what he went through last year.

"As Season One was winding down, he was getting a lot of confidence," says Gustin. "He was feeling like he knew what he was doing. He felt that he had that team behind him, and they all felt like they could take down these meta-humans. And they were doing some good. He was this hero that everyone says he was. But all of that has kind of been turned on its head a little bit in Season Two.

"The Flash is getting a lot of acclaim from the city for being a hero," he continues, "and Barry is having a hard time dealing with that, just because, as we all know, Eddie stopped Wells. He was the hero that day, and Barry knows that. As a result, he's having a hard time dealing with the attention and has kind of shunned everybody that he works with, because he doesn't want anyone else to have to die."

Ironically, just as Oliver Queen is looking at the bright side of life, Barry



> "BARRY'S HAVING A HARD TIME DEALING WITH THE ATTENTION... HE DOESN'T WANT ANYONE ELSE TO DIE"
> GRANT GUSTIN



Diggle (David Ramsey) will suit up himself in Season Four.



If Oliver's back, it's likely because trouble's afoot.



DREAMING OF KILLER FROST

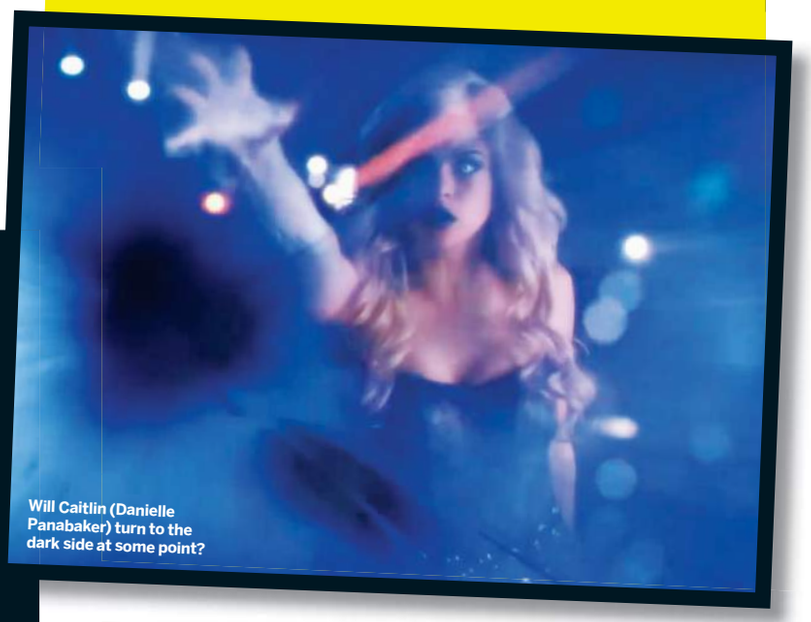
Danielle Panabaker on fulfilling the Speed Force prophecy

There is a moment while The Flash is breaking the time barrier in the Season One finale where the audience catches quick glimpses of images from different time periods, including a, well, flash of actress Danielle Panabaker in the guise of DC Comics' Killer Frost, which would seem to be a portent of things to come. While Panabaker isn't sure what the future holds, she does admit it was exciting being transformed into the character.

"Originally," she reflects, "this idea was that Barry ran so fast that he saw into the future, an idea that Andrew Kreisberg had for earlier in the season. We started working on the look in November of last year, particularly the costume. The costume had the biggest shift from beginning to end and the first suit that we built was a one-piece, like a cat suit. So that was intense. I remember looking at it and thinking, 'How am I going to walk every day?' 'Hot darn, it's going to be hard to go the bathroom.' Things like that. That was the first iteration. Then they started all over, so we started again and we ended up with what we had that you don't really see. It's blue leather pants with this corset top, which I love.

"Then," she continues, "with the hair, the first wig we tried on was a pixie, because looking at the comic books, there are a lot of pixie wigs. So we tried it on and it looked great. What was cool was between myself and Andrew and everybody else, we all pretty quickly decided it should actually be longer. That wig was handmade, and I think it's beautiful. It was hard to get white hair like that. The same thing with the make-up. It was an evolving look, for sure. We did lots of tests. There was a moment where Andrew wanted to see my lips completely whited out. The same colour, which we tried, but I felt strongly that a navy lip would look better. I'm really happy with the way that turned out."





Will Caitlin (Danielle Panabaker) turn to the dark side at some point?

Allen is going to be carrying himself with a bit more gravitas. Gustin agrees, "Yes, he's kind of going about things in a different way where we find him. It's my feeling that a lot of Season Two will see Barry maturing, trying to find his confidence again."

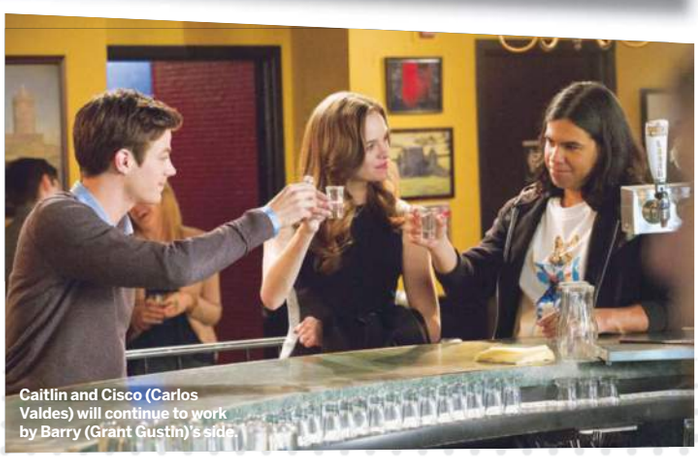
Andrew Kreisberg, who serves as executive producer on *The Flash* and *Arrow* alongside Greg Berlanti, believes that last season was "magical" for both shows, but that the former really surpassed their wildest expectations.

"Greg has certainly been in charge of far more shows than I have," he explains, "but we've said there's only a couple of times in your career where you get to have a season like that, where it started out strong and seemed to only get stronger. Part of that was, for whatever reason, we felt like we had a really good handle on what the show was very early on. There weren't as many growing pains, certainly as there were on *Arrow* where, if you look at some of those early episodes, they're not as emblematic of what the show became once that show really started to hit."

One of the marked things about both series is that they are made up of true ensembles, and not characters paying lip service to fill in the non-superhero moments with the leads. Each and every one of them have been just as impacted by the events that have played out as Arrow or Flash have been.

David Ramsey, who plays John Diggle in *Arrow*, observes, "Season Three ended where the team fell back in line, allowing Oliver to go off into the sunset with Felicity. But Diggle was the only one that really didn't let Oliver off the hook and really held his feet to the fire, so to speak. Diggle sees Oliver's actions as a liability. Diggle was a military guy. If one man hurts the unit, the whole unit suffers. That's Diggle's point of view. Putting Malcolm Merlyn at the head of the League of Assassins is, Diggle thinks, a mistake. Trusting Malcolm before he trusted his team is a mistake. Kidnapping Lyla and leaving his child at home... well, Diggle sees all of this as a mistake. These things hurt the team. It's not just a personal thing. They're not being intelligent strategically. That's what Diggle has a problem with. Those sentiments are echoed in Season Four.

"It's not just about, 'He kidnapped my wife and left my child to die,'" adds ⇨



Caitlin and Cisco (Carlos Valdes) will continue to work by Barry (Grant Gustin)'s side

MEET THE NEW BREED

Introducing Arrow and The Flash's future stars



WALLY WEST *(Keiynan Lonsdale)*

The nephew of Iris West in the comics – not to mention Barry Allen's successor as The Flash – there's no word on whether he's from this reality or Earth 2. Our money's on him being a relative of Iris's come to town, who ends up falling in with Barry.



JAY GARRICK *(Teddy Sears)*

DC Comics' original Flash was later retconned to come from Earth 2, which is exactly where The CW's version hails from. A recently released image shows that the show is staying faithful to his original tin-helmeted look, in spite of the small matter of it looking ridiculous.



ZOOM *(Unknown)*

Losing the 'professor' prefix, the staple Flash foe has been confirmed as the main adversary for Season Two, although his identity remains elusive. Will he be played by the returning Tom Cavanagh, or is it Rick Cosnett as an alternative-reality Eddie?



DAMIEN DARHK *(Neal McDonough)*

Arrow's new big bad, and formerly the rival of Ra's al Ghul for the League of Assassins crown, his arrival is likely to coincide with HIVE's increased prominence, especially considering his involvement with them in the comics.



MR TERRIFIC *(Echo Kellum)*

Another (relatively) big-name arrival from the comics, the brilliantly named inventor, technological genius and Olympic-winning athlete (he lives up to his name) will work alongside Felicity at Palmer Industries, and bears the distinction of being *Arrow*'s first openly gay character.



JOHN CONSTANTINE *(Matt Ryan)*

You may recognise this guy. Yes, the star of the short-lived *Constantine* series will be making a one-of-a-kind crossover in an episode of *Arrow*, with Ryan reprising his role. Will The CW get the irritable exorcist's personality right?



By this point, Laurel has fully taken on her sister's former mantle.

Ramsey. "He was pissed. He says, even in that episode, that he understands that Oliver does things a certain way. That's fine. He just can't work with him. It's that matter-of-fact to Diggle. It's going to take some time to mend it. It's not going to be a catastrophic event that brings these men back together; it's going to be a meeting of the hearts, and a commitment to each other, to the team and to the city that really brings them back together. But they will get back together. The bromance will continue. But in the beginning, Team Arrow will be operating without Arrow. That's how they're operating as far as they're concerned, with Oliver Queen leaving for the suburbs. That clearly changes very, very quickly."

Katie Cassidy, whose Laurel Lance became the Black Canary in Season Three, points out, "Right from the beginning it's very much a team, with everyone playing their own role in it. Whether or not they did a good job keeping up with the city is something you're going to find out in the premiere of Season Four. There definitely is a missing link, but Team Arrow does the best that they can."

While the actress is enjoying kicking ass as the Canary, there is bound to be some sort of emotional reverberation when she learns that her sister, Sara (played by Caity Lotz) is not dead, and will ultimately be on the *Legends Of Tomorrow* team. "That's going to be another emotional roller coaster," she admits, "but I also don't think it's going to be anything negative. I think it'll be somewhat nice. You know, her sister's probably going to be proud of her, but also worried, because she's putting herself in harm's way. I mean, it's a good thing to have your sister back."

And she feels it's good to represent a powerful role model for young girls. "It's so fulfilling and great to hear," Cassidy smiles. "I'm so glad that I can be somebody who can represent women today and stronger women like Laurel. It makes my job much easier to know that other people look up to me."

Willa Holland – the secret identity of Oliver's sister, Thea, who has donned a red hood and joined the team – knows



It looks like Barry's problems are just beginning.





Season Three ended with Oliver (Stephen Amell) passing the torch on to others, like Laurel (Katie Cassidy).



Nyssa (Katrina Law) remains reluctantly under the leadership of Malcolm Merlyn.

> SEASON TWO WILL FIND BARRY MATURING AND TRYING TO FIND HIS CONFIDENCE AGAIN
> GRANT GUSTIN

What will the new status quo be for Barry Allen in Season Two?





how she feels. The feeling hit her the first time she put on her costume.

"I have this so embedded in my memory," she laughs. "I was walking in it, I felt the clenched feeling in my chest, and then I saw it in the mirror, and tears came down my face out of absolute joy. It was just this thing where I felt like I was waiting for it for a while and it finally came. After a couple of years of hard work, it was something I've always wanted. I've always been obsessed with comic-books since I was a kid. I'm a huge nerd myself, so it was just kind of like an actual dream come true.

"Physically," Holland says, "Thea got stronger last year. Emotionally, I think she became stronger as well, and we're not exactly sure where she's going to be now with the unknown effects of the Lazarus Pit. There is a new sense of vulnerability to her, which is not necessarily a weakness. She's not quite aware of everything just yet, even though she thinks she is. That in itself leaves her slightly vulnerable."

Character evolution is just as prevalent on the fast side of town, as Candice Patton, who plays Iris West in *The Flash*, points out. "For so much of Season One, Iris was kept in the dark, and it kind of kept her isolated from everyone else," she says. "So she's dealing with feeling isolated and betrayed by her father, her best friend and losing Mason, her mentor; and then losing her boyfriend, Eddie. It was a very emotionally rough season. I feel like, for Iris, moving into Season Two we'll see her kind of begin to grieve those things and then move forward in being an asset to Team Flash. The nice thing is that I haven't gotten to really work with a lot of the actors yet, but now it's fun sitting at the consoles at Star Labs, having an opinion and talking with the other characters.

"At this point," she continues, "I'm not sure exactly how Iris's contribution to the team as a reporter is going to look. But if you look at the idea that Cisco and Caitlin are science and tech, Iris is heart, and she gets people. She's the kind of person who's on the street. She knows how to talk to people and get the scoop and get what's really going on in Central City, so I think she'll be able to add that kind of impact to the team. Get them information that maybe they can't get on a computer. Sometimes you've got to be face-to-face with people and really get the scoop."

Carlos Valdes, aka Cisco Ramon, sees the character and his journey fairly succinctly: "At his heart, Cisco is a little kid, having that youthful energy and spirit about him. I'd say his biggest struggle – his biggest arc, so to speak – is dealing with maturity and having to struggle with accountability, responsibility and whatnot. Season Two is definitely a continuation of that – of learning how to be responsible. Learning what it takes to be a hero, essentially.

"Plus, obviously there are some biological things happening to Cisco, in his body. Specifically with his head; his head space. There were dreams and visions that he was having around episodes 18 and 20. Obviously, those were used as tools for catching the Reverse Flash. I think fans can expect some more of that and expect, specifically, for Cisco to start dealing ⇨

with the changes that are happening in his body and the repercussions of that."

The biggest question going into Season Two is regarding Tom Cavanagh's Harrison Wells, and how he is going to be a part of the proceedings given the character's apparent death. Unfortunately, the actor has nothing to say on the subject.

"This is nothing that I did," emphasises Cavanagh, "but the writers crafted a character who genuinely had goals that made him good and bad. He needed to protect Barry. He ends up in that relationship, protecting him, and that mentorship which was genuine and that affection bled in too. At the same time, this is a guy trying to get home, and if people needed to die for him to do it, so be it. To him they'd already been dead for 100 years. He had these two goals which were genuine and organic, allowing me as the character to play both those levels without it being a dastardly, sketchy villain. I think we have more of that coming up in Season Two. For an actor, it's a joy to be able to play two levels that were kind of earned."

Beyond our heroes (not counting Wells, of course), there will be new villains between both shows. In the case of *Arrow*, actor Neal McDonough will be playing Damien Darhk, former member of the League of Assassins and the leader of HIVE, who will be making a rather prominent appearance in Starling City.

"Obviously with Neal, who is a blessing on the show, we're going older than the character from the comics," says Guggenheim. "It's keeping with our normal philosophy, which is we use the comic-books as a starting off point, not an ending point. Our version of Damien is different from the other kind of big bads we've had on the show before. He's not as stentorian as Ra's, and he's not as unhinged as Slade Wilson. He probably has the closest parallel with Malcolm Merlyn, but I think he's got a malevolence to him that Malcolm did not have. Malcolm would basically always think, 'I'm doing what I'm doing to save the city,' whereas Damien is just pure evil. He's a form of evil we haven't seen on the show yet. In many ways we've always approached our big bads as we wanted them to be the hero of their story. We wanted them not to be evil. This year we decided we're going to go different; we really want someone who is truly malevolent, and Neal just brings that home."

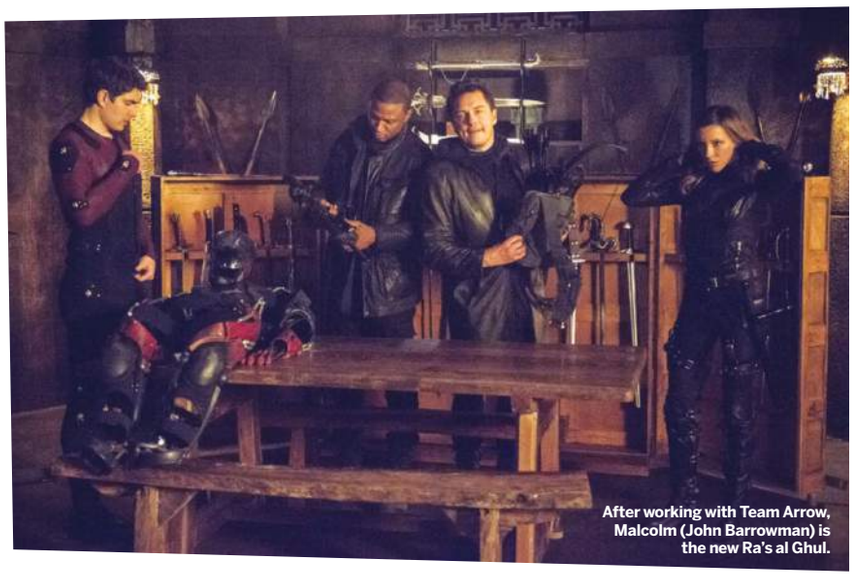


"THE FIRST THREE SEASONS CLOSED A CHAPTER FOR OLIVER"
STEPHEN AMELL





Will all be forgiven between Oliver and Diggle?



After working with Team Arrow, Malcolm (John Barrowman) is the new Ra's al Ghul.

Many fans are expecting the gorilla Grodd to be the big bad of Season Two of *The Flash*, but there is no way that could happen. "Grodd can't be the villain," says Kreisberg, "because that would cost all the money in the world. Grodd will definitely be back, I can assure you of that. The kinds of villains we're having and their agendas are different. Last year was about getting the band together and Barry's first initial steps into being The Flash. This year the question is, what does that mean? Everybody in Central City knows about The Flash now. He's becoming a public figure, and the people of Central City live in a universe where people have superpowers. And there are evil people with superpowers. The idea that someone can melt a building is not outlandish anymore. By the same token, they all know there's a saviour out there who has the powers to fight back. Watching Barry deal with the fact that he's becoming a little famous and he's not just the mysterious red streak is something that gets dealt with."

As both Grant Gustin and Stephen Amell head into their respective new seasons, each are feeling more prepared than ever to handle pretty much anything that's thrown their way.

"Everything about shooting has become easier," Gustin says. "The effects, I know how they work now. We have guest directors all the time, so it's more helpful now that certain things that they're maybe slightly confused about, I understand how we usually shoot them. So that's become easier, for sure. I know what to expect in general when I read a page. I don't just think, 'Oh, this is cool.' I'm like, 'Oh, this is what it's going to take to shoot this episode in this moment,' and it all becomes mentally just less of a stress, because you know what you're in for."

For his part, Amell notes, "I'm better at the action, because I'm better at learning fight scenes fast. I'll tell you, after this hiatus, if Oliver needs to fight with a hockey stick or a baseball bat, we're all good. I don't know if that makes sense... it will."

Arrow: Season Four and *The Flash: Season Two* will both air on Sky 1 later in 2015.

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WHAT ON EARTH 2?

How the CW-verse got progressively more far-fetched

Initially marketed as being close to The Dark Knight by way of its dark-and-gritty tone, *Arrow* got more and more outlandish to the point where few bat an eyelid at the latest oddball to enter *The Flash*'s rogue's gallery. Here's how the realms of plausibility became increasingly blurred:



OLIVER QUEEN'S INSANE WORKOUT REGIME

We get that superheroes need to work out to stay in shape like everybody else, but some of Oliver's fitness maintenance methods need to be seen to be believed. He doesn't even have a spotter, for crying out loud. Still, we're willing to let this one slide. At least it's trying to provide an explanation for something. And who doesn't enjoy having a Felicity Smoak moment every now and again?



MALCOLM MERLYN'S SURVIVAL

After being speared through the gut with an arrow by Oliver in the Season One finale, Dark Archer Malcolm Merlyn somehow lives to fight another day, despite clearly suffering from a serious case of deadness. Maybe his explanation about using some obscure League of Assassins technique for staying alive has legs though. That or John Barrowman actually is Jack Harkness wherever he goes.



MIRAKURU

In all honesty this will probably be invented at some point in the future, but still, the super-soldier serum – sorry, Mirakuru – is essentially bogus science, and therefore another example of *Arrow*'s propensity to depart from reality when it has to. In their defence, at least it has negative side effects, just so it isn't a catch-all solution, and has led to some great story arcs.



THE FLASH

Okay, now we're sceptical. Chemicals don't make lightening something that'll bestow powers on you; it'll just make you that extra bit more dead. This was the moment when The CW-verse officially abandoned all claim to being grounded in any kind of reality. Still, it meant we got *The Flash*, so it's probably worth it.



RESURRECTION

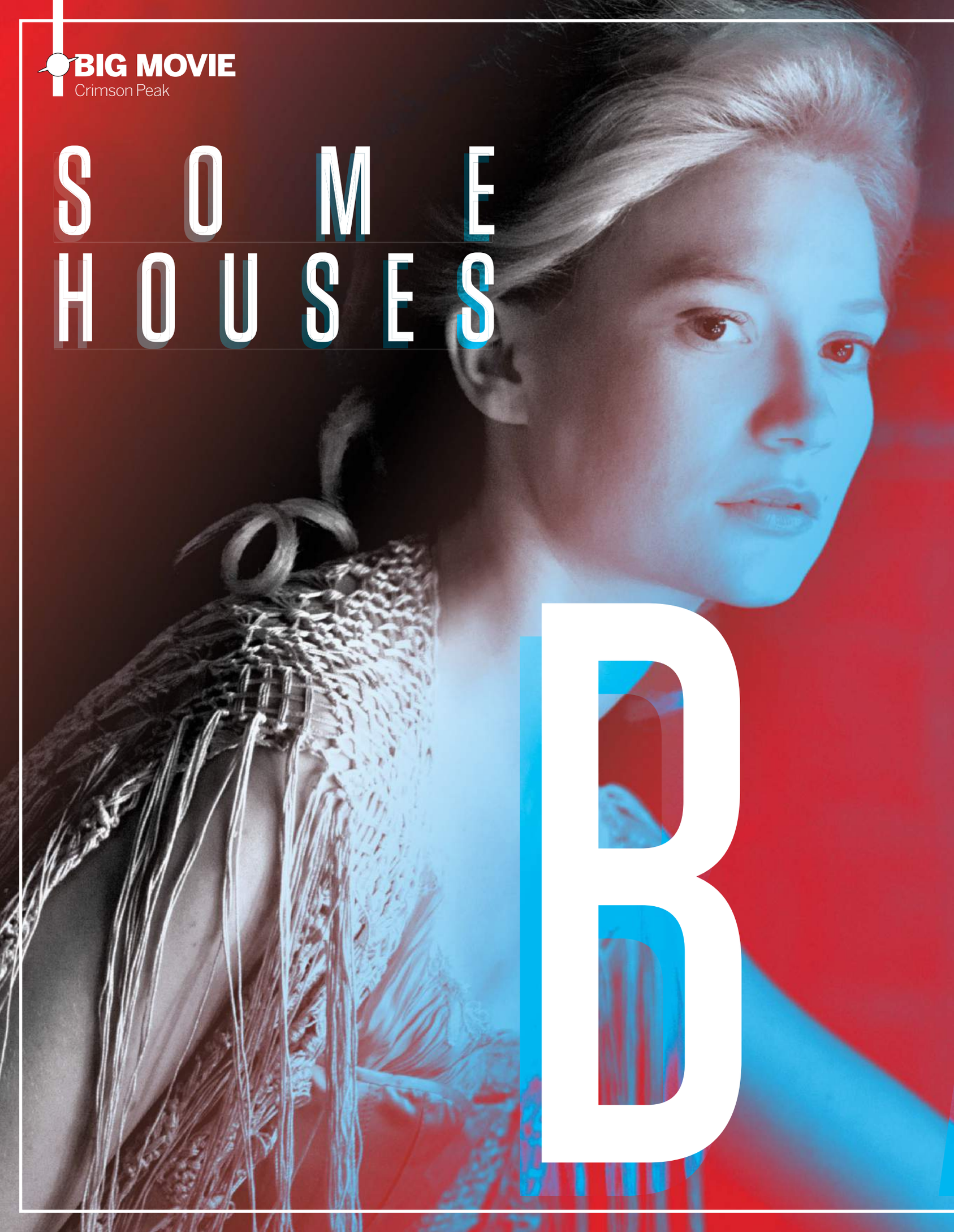
Oliver and Thea both survived injuries that should have killed them, the latter because of the Lazarus Pit (and from the looks of the *Legends Of Tomorrow* trailer, that's how Sara will be coming back too), and the former through just being hard as nails. Apparently being stabbed and kicked off a cliff face isn't such a big deal in this world. Still, Oliver's a badass with a ridiculous pain threshold, so we'll let it go.



TIME TRAVEL

Which brings us to where we are now. *The Flash* and the upcoming *Legends Of Tomorrow* are both heavily centred around being able to travel in time, as well as featuring the apparently ageless immortal Vandal Savage. We're officially living in a fantasy world now.

SOME HOUSES B



SOME HOUSE ARE BORN BAD

GUILLERMO DEL TORO TAKES US INSIDE HIS GOTHIC HORROR CRIMSON PEAK

WORDS
JONATHAN HATFULL

IF THERE'S ONE WORKING FILMMAKER WE ASSOCIATE WITH THE GOTHIC, IT'S FANTASTIC CINEMA'S MODERN MASTER GUILLERMO DEL TORO. FROM THE TERRIBLE PRICE OF immortality in *Cronos* to the brutally wicked stepfather of *Pan's Labyrinth*, his films are steeped in the genre. With its old dark house, sinister aristocrats, imperilled ingénue and unquiet dead, *Crimson Peak* looks to be the ultimate expression of this love, and quite frankly, we're surprised that it has taken him this long. As it turns out, del Toro has had *Crimson Peak* on his mind for quite some time. ⇒

"It was really the fascination I have with gothic romance, which except for the occasional reworking of *Jane Eyre*, *Wuthering Heights*, *Bleak House*, *Great Expectations* – the fully acknowledged classics – is a genre that has fallen by the wayside," explains del Toro. "Because when you say gothic romance, most people think of Fabio holding a girl by the edge of a cliff in a paperback by Barbara Cartland, or the Vincent Price movies with Roger Corman. The first movie I ever saw was *Wuthering Heights* with Laurence Olivier. That's the first movie I ever saw in my life. And you can go back and find an interview with me as early as you want, it's not something I made up for *Crimson Peak*, it's completely true!"

"I really loved the great, grand lush classics like *Rebecca*, and *Dragonwyck* with Vincent Price," he continues. "They are this infuriatingly addictive mixture of the trappings of a supernatural/horror movie and the darkened emotions of a melodrama or a romance story. I thought maybe I can do a movie that is a very classic, almost old-fashioned model of that kind of story, but with a little bit more of a modern edge on the sex and the violence and the colour palette, making it really vibrant photographically and in terms of design. The genesis was also to try to screw with the idea of the pure, virginal heroine, to have two female characters who grow into very powerful figures, having the villains not be just towering dark figures and make them hopefully a little more human."

Hot on the heels of the gleeful mech vs kaiju carnage of *Pacific Rim*, *Crimson Peak* feels like another completely wholehearted and immersive love-letter to a beloved genre. Our tale begins at the end of the 19th century in New York, where budding author Edith Cushing (Mia Wasikowska) is wooed by mysterious visiting land-owner Sir Thomas Sharpe (Tom Hiddleston).

> **THE INTENTION I HAD WAS TO MAKE THE MOST BEAUTIFUL FILM I HAVE EVER MADE, AND I FEEL IT IS**
> GUILLERMO DEL TORO

Ignoring the advice of her childhood friend Dr Alan McMichael (Charlie Hunnam), Edith marries Thomas and moves with him to the north of England, and into the remote and cavernous old house he shares with his icy sister Lucille (Jessica Chastain). With strict instructions not to venture beyond the permitted rooms, Edith begins to discover the house's dark secrets, and realises that the living aren't the only ones in residence at Crimson Peak.

If this is all sounding a little bit more like del Toro's Spanish-language films like *The Devil's Backbone* and *Pan's Labyrinth* than his Hollywood movies, that's no coincidence. "It's the first thematically really daring movie I've done in the English language," he explains. "It doesn't fall neatly into a genre or a thing that is in vogue. Most of the movies I've done in English, I take great care to fall into pop culture, that they can be digested by the ease in which they play with those conventions. But gothic romance is in many ways almost an affectation or an acquired taste of a more rarefied arena, and then if you also do it in a dark way and in a way that is very vivid... *Crimson Peak* is much more experimental and much more daring and much more, in many ways, personal like the smaller films."

It's hard to imagine a more exciting cast for del Toro to take this journey with. The *Crimson Peak* line-up went through some changes before filming, with Tom Hiddleston stepping in for Benedict Cumberbatch in the role of the tall, dark and handsome (and secretive)



Edith will discover the Sharpes' terrible secrets.

WASIKOWSKA VS HIDDLESTON

ULTIMATE GOTH-OFF

Is Mia Wasikowska's indie cred a match for Hiddleston's Marvel-mania? It's a Goth-off!



ROUND ONE



Alice Kingsleigh (Alice In Wonderland) vs Loki (Thor)

Hiddleston has this from the very get-go, as Wasikowska is hobbled by Tim Burton's decision to make Alice one of his few non-Goth heroines. And the film's not great.

Thomas, while Mia Wasikowska replaced Emma Stone as Edith, who has more backbone than many give her credit for. As far as replacements go, it doesn't get better than that. Wasikowska has established herself as one of the most exciting actors working today, with stunning performances in *Stoker*, *Maps To The Stars* and *Only Lovers Left Alive*, while Hiddleston has balanced his Marvel duties by working with fascinating directors like Jim Jarmusch and Ben Wheatley. When you add the consistently excellent Jessica Chastain as Thomas' sinister sister Lucille, you've got one hell of a cast.


Jessica Chastain as Thomas' icy sister Lucille Sharpe.

"We were casting from a point of view that actually loved the characters, good guys and bad guys alike," explains del Toro. "If you do your job right in a gothic romance, people should come out equally, if not more, enamoured, of the bad guys than the good guys. The easiest way to satisfy the audience is to create a bad guy that they applaud when they die. But ultimately in most of movies I have tried to avoid this, perhaps with the exception of *Pan's Labyrinth*, where I thought fascism was not a very subtle thing to portray! [laughs] But other than that I try my damnedest to show the human side of the good guys and the bad guys. And the actors brought that compassion and understanding with them. We created very careful biographies and very careful tools for them to remember that they were not just a function to the melodrama, but actually characters with a terrible story."

Despite that careful preparation, del Toro tells us that the cast continued to find ways to surprise him with what they brought to the characters. "They surprised me every day," he enthuses. "When you're working with actors this good, it's truly fantastic. I think that *Pan's Labyrinth* and *Crimson* are the two movies where we had the perfect cast, and in both instances you provide them with a set of colours, and then on the day they find together a new way of making it alive. Mia cannot help but be in the moment. In one of my favourite moments in the movie, on the day she was saying, 'How I do act through this emotion?' and I gave her one clue, and then she came into that scene completely real. She said to me, 'I cannot do it many times, but here we go.' It was incredibly moving."


The stunning Allerdale Hall: Beautiful, crumbling, unsafe...

"Jessica always found a way to make Lucille what we needed in the moment. She asked me early on, 'What can you tell me about Lucille that is not in the biography that I can use on the day?' and I said she doesn't blink. And if you watch the movie again, I think she blinks three times in the entire movie. And then there was Tom, who manages to make you understand [Thomas], or at least see his point of view."

Visually, del Toro has pushed himself further than he ever has before. The cinematography is gorgeous, the costume design is beautiful, and Allerdale Hall itself is absolutely stunning. "A house as old as this one becomes, in time, a living thing," Thomas tells Edith. With its dazzling hallway, long dark corridors, a creaky elevator and promises of unsafe areas, the house is, to deploy a cliché, a character in its own right, filled with the kind of detail we've come to expect from del Toro.


Del Toro told us that he wanted *Crimson Peak* to be his most beautiful film.

"Well, that was the intention I had, yes, to make the most beautiful film I have made, and I feel it is," he explains. "I think it is superior in craftsmanship to anything I have ever done. And at the same time I knew that it needed to be a movie that connects with you, or doesn't connect with you depending on your appreciation for the genre. If you're expecting a romance like in *Sleepless In Seattle* or if you're expecting a horror like a torture-porn, found-footage movie, you probably will never fall into

ROUND TWO



India Stoker (Stoker) vs Loki (The Avengers)

Hiddleston's next eligible Goth role is... Loki again, and this time loses to Wasikowska's fascinating steely turn in Park-Chan Wook's wonderfully creepy chiller.

ROUND THREE



Ava vs Adam (Only Lovers Left Alive)

The duo both vamped up in Jim Jarmusch's brilliant deadpan vampire romance. Wasikowska has more fun with her impulsive Ava, but Hiddleston's Goth game is that much more powerful as the brooding Adam.

ROUND FOUR



Agatha Weiss (Maps To The Stars) vs The Great Escapo (Muppets Most Wanted)

This one seems a little unfair, given that one character is a sinister, gloved mental patient and the other is a cameo in a *Muppets* movie...

RESULT: IT'S A DRAW!
Crimson Peak will have to be the tie-break....

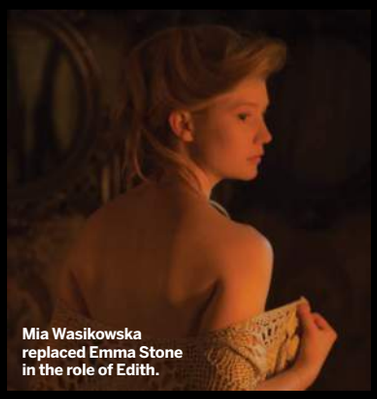
this. But if you know and love gothic romance and Victorian fiction, I wanted to give you a fully realised world that was 360 degrees: sound design, music, image, everything. If you fall into it you're completely immersed."

Immersing the actors, as well as the audience, in the world of the film meant that it was vital to del Toro to actually build Allerdale Hall on the Toronto set. "To me, it was of the utmost importance, because to me a movie is not pieces," he explains. "To me, a movie is not set design and wardrobe design and cinematography and story. It's all one thing, and the same goes for the acting. If the actors are going to enter a house that they expect to be magnificent, and you give them a green screen, I think something gets lost in the translation there. When you drop them right in the middle of it, you know they are as much in awe as you are. And we spent the next few weeks shooting in awe of this thing. I think that it is very important that we research and detail every texture, every colour, because they're telling a story. America is all golden and tobacco and beautiful and vibrant and full of daylight, and then you go to Allerdale Hall and it's cold and dark and rotting away, and that's definitely an aid to the journey."

There's also the matter of the ghosts, whose appearances punctuate *Crimson Peak*'s air of menace with bursts of real terror. "Avoiding spoilers, but very much like *Devil's Backbone*, the ghosts in the movie, little by little you realise that the true horror of the film is of human origin," he teases. "And that's a very difficult line to walk, because obviously you want the audience to be engrossed by the tale, but the ultimate goal is to show a different result. I wanted to make them translucent and somewhat beautiful, but I wanted them to feel physical on the set, so we went with make-up effects. Actors were on the set in make-up working with the other actors. I decided since the movie was very, very carefully designed and colour-coded, the ghosts would be colour-coded. Designing them took about six months. We did beautiful costumes for some of them. And it's an interesting way of telling the story visually, it's not just a capricious desire to colour code in an innovative way. It really is coming out of a storytelling compulsion."

That compulsion means that del Toro is already in the midst of production on *Pacific Rim 2*. We suggest that it must be a little jarring to jump from a Gothic mansion back to the Jaeger programme, but he tells us that's not the case. "I'm used to it because I haven't ever been able to fully control who finances what movie of mine," he explains. "I went from *Pan's Labyrinth* to *Hellboy 2* to *Pacific Rim* in short order. And I went from *Devil's Backbone* to *Blade II*! I'm used to it. Any transition comes naturally, it's not a big problem. But even in a strange way when we were doing *Pacific Rim*, I insisted back then, instead of having everything high-tech, super-polished, car commercial surfaces, we went for decay and rust. I used to call *Pacific Rim* goth-tech." You'll have to wait until 2017 for the return of goth-tech. Until then, *Crimson Peak* is just a few weeks away.

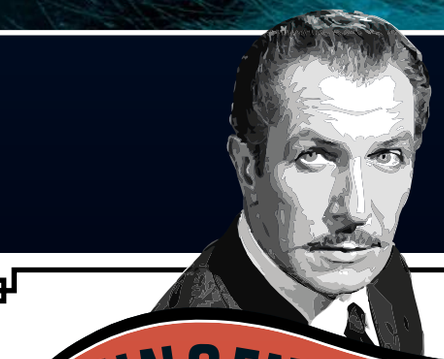
Crimson Peak will be released in UK cinemas on 16 October.



Mia Wasikowska replaced Emma Stone in the role of Edith.



Hiddleston and Chastain as the perfect Gothic siblings.



VINCENT PRICE'S Gothic Horror interior decorating

Exploring the joys of the Gothic Mansion with the master of the macabre...



Heavy curtains
You'll want long, luxurious curtains that hang heavy from (preferably) ornate runners. These are perfect for hiding behind, blocking out any trace of sunlight, and when they catch fire, boy, you'll know about it.



Dangerous elevator
As seen in *Crimson Peak*, any kind of modernity should come with its own sense of danger. Sure, this elevator looks beautiful, but you'd better believe you'll think twice about using it.



Imposing paintings
The scarier the painting, the better. If it looks as though the subject of the portrait is about to leap from the frame and strangle you, then you're on the right track.



Ridiculously ornate furnishings
From chairs to lamps, every item should speak of a glorious long gone past. Look at this armchair from *Crimson Peak*! Isn't it wonderful?



Terrifying housekeeper
Sure, this isn't technically a furnishing, but they come with the house and they're crucial! Take Mrs Danvers from *Rebecca*. There's a fantastic bubbling stew of hatred, resentment and lust. Wonderful.



Locked doors
What's a Gothic house without secrets? Well, lots of secrets, let's be honest! Whether it's a mad woman in the attic, or a body in the basement, everything can be kept behind a locked door.



The attic
You have to have an attic, if only so you can instruct people never to go up there. It's not safe, you know. Houses this old are rotting, dangerous and absolutely stunning.



Basement coffin storage
You are going to want the loved ones who have departed this world close at hand, especially when you can hear their fingernails clawing at the lids of their coffins in the night...

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CELEBRATING 30 YEARS

IN 1985, MARTY MCFLY TRAVELLED BACK TO 1955, AND IN THE PROCESS MADE HISTORY. NOW WE'RE IN 2015, AND THERE ARE STILL NO HOVER BOARDS. MICHAEL J FOX, CHRISTOPHER LLOYD AND LEA THOMPSON TALK ABOUT THE DELOREAN, THE CONCEPT OF TIME AND BACK TO THE FUTURE'S UNCHANGING LEGACY...

WORDS **POPPY-JAY PALMER**

THE FUTURE TURNS 30



2015 PREDICTIONS

HOVERBOARDS

What BTTF predicted: Skateboards will no longer need wheels and will hover above the ground.

Do we have it? No.

Alternative: Two-wheeled electric drifting boards are quite close.

CELEBRATING 30 YEARS

BACK TO THE FUTURE IS ONE OF THE GREATEST FILMS EVER MADE. ASK ANYONE. THE GENRE LINES ARE BLURRED A LITTLE – IT'S A SCI-FI. IT'S A COMEDY. It's a high-school movie – but whatever category it falls under, it's still one of the best. 30 years after its release in 1985, the excitement, sense of adventure and sheer joy that it generated hasn't dimmed one iota.

The film's premise is pretty simple: boy goes back in time. Boy meets his young parents. Boy prevents his parents from meeting. Boy finds a way to get his parents together to ensure his birth is not erased from time. What was intended to be a fun summer adventure flick has become one of the biggest brands in cinema. 2015 marks not only the year that Marty (Michael J Fox), Doc (Christopher Lloyd) and Jennifer (Elisabeth Shue) travelled to in *Part II*, but 30 years since the first film was released, won hearts and worked its way up the film scale to become an instant and enduring classic.

Frankly, we'd be happy to celebrate the 31st anniversary and the 32nd, and all the subsequent anniversaries after that. It's that good. Whether you've been a fan for the full three decades or been introduced to the series for the first time this year, *Back To The Future* continues to touch the lives of film fans through time and space, and will probably continue to do so forever.

Production on the film was rocky at first. Robert Zemeckis and Bob Gale's script was rejected by different studios a handful of times before Amblin Entertainment and Universal finally decided to take it on four years and three drafts later. Casting was difficult too. After seeing Michael J Fox, who was quickly becoming a teen idol-slash-pint-sized heart throb in popular sitcom *Family Ties*, Zemeckis and Gale pegged him as their dream Marty McFly. But the show's producer was unwilling to give him up. Fox wasn't even told about the role as a result. Instead, Eric Stoltz, who had starred in *The Wild Life* with actress Lea Thompson – who played Marty's mother, Lorraine – in 1984, was cast as Marty, and production commenced.

A month into filming, however, Zemeckis began to feel that Marty had been grossly miscast. Stoltz just didn't fit into the film he was trying to create, and played Marty as more of the straight man to Doc's eccentric genius rather than the youthful goofball we now know.

In early 1985, *Family Ties*' producer finally allowed Fox to star in the film, as long as the sitcom remained his primary focus. The deal resulted in incredibly long days for Fox, who would



> "I KNEW IT WAS SOMETHING THAT WAS GOING TO STICK AROUND"
> CHRISTOPHER LLOYD

The pair's journey started at the Twin Pines mall.

OUTTA TIME!

Get to grips with the changing concept of time with this handy non-changing timeline



1885



January 1
Doc accidentally time travels to the Old West from 1955

September 5
The Hill Valley festival celebrates the erection of the courthouse



September 7
Buford Tannen challenges Clint Eastwood to a gunfight

September 7
Marty McFly travels back to 1985, this time for good

1955

November 5
Doc Emmett Brown invents the flux capacitor

November 5
Marty travels from 1985 to 1955. He is the first person to do so

November 12
Doc Brown and Marty arrive in 1955 from 1985A

November 16
Marty leaves 1955 to rescue Doc, who is trapped in 1885

1958

March 31
Chuck Berry releases *Johnny B Goode*

March 26
Biff Tannen wins his first million betting on a horse race



1972

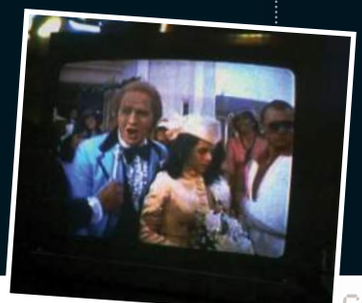
Rock band Van Halen is formed. They go on to make a bit of an impact

1973

March 15
Biff Tannen shoots and kills George McFly



Unknown
Biff Tannen marries George's widow, Lorraine



1975

June 20
Jaws, directed by Steven Spielberg, is released in cinemas

1977

Goldie Wilson is elected the mayor of Hill Valley



KEY

- BTTF 1
- BTTF 2
- BTTF 3
- BTTF UNIVERSE
- REAL LIFE





film *Back To The Future* at night, and then rush to the *Family Ties* set during the day.

"They actually kept some of the shots that they had already shot with Eric, and just put in Michael on his side," remembers Thompson. "That was weird. But luckily the one big scene that they shot they didn't do that. The scene where he wakes up and sees me young for the first time, Eric and I shot that, and then they re-shot the whole thing with Michael. It was such a completely different feeling."

But after all the setbacks early on, the film became one of the biggest cases of 'worth it' in cinematic history. It was obvious from the week it opened in 1985 that *Back To The Future* was the kind of film that doesn't age.

"Kids who weren't alive when it opened started coming up to me saying that they loved the movie, and I saw that, ironically for a time-travel movie, it had a timelessness," Fox reminisces. "[It] existed apart from its period, and it resonated with the younger audiences. I just thought, 'Wow, this is going to be around for a long time.' These kids like it. My kids still haven't watched it... If they have they haven't told me about it. They've watched it in secret!"

2015 PREDICTIONS

FLYING CARS

What BTTF predicted: Regular cars will be able to retract their wheels and fly.
Do we have it? No.
Alternative: Do helicopters count? No? Then we have nothing.

The cast reunited for LFCC 2015.









1979

The Hill Valley Clock Tower is rebuilt as Biff's Pleasure Paradise Hotel and Casino

1981

January 20
Ronald Reagan becomes President of the USA



1983

May 22
Doc is declared insane and committed to Mental Ward B



1985

October 12
Libyan terrorists steal plutonium from the local power plant

October 26
Einstein the dog becomes the world's first time traveller

October 26
Marty returns to 1985 from 1955, having altered the timeline

October 26
Doc returns from 2015 and goes back with Marty and Jennifer

October 26
Doc, Marty, Jennifer and Einstein travel from 2015 to alternate 1985

October 27
Doc and Clara travel from 1885 to 1985 in the steam train

October 25
Joey Baines fails to make parole. Welcome home party cancelled

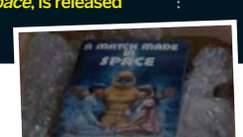
October 26
Marty accidentally travels to 1955; the first person to do so

October 26
Doc travels to 2015. Excited to find out he doesn't need roads

October 27
Marty arrives back from 1885 and the DeLorean is destroyed

October 27
Doc and Marty fix the 1985 alternate timeline and travel back

November
George McFly's first novel, *A Match Made In Space*, is released



2015

October 16
Jaws 19, directed by Max Spielberg, is released in cinemas

October 21
Doc, Marty and Jennifer arrive in 2015 from 1985

October 22
Marty McFly Jr is tried, sentenced and convicted to 15 years

October 26
Doc and Einstein arrive in 2015 from 1985

October 21
The Chicago Cubs go on to win the World Series

October 21
The 47-year-old Marty McFly is fired from his job

October 23
Queen Diana pays a visit to Washington DC

October 28
Marlene McFly attempts to break Marty Jr out of prison



CELEBRATING 30 YEARS



GOTTA GET BACK IN TIME

This new doc is being released on Future Day

WORDS CHRIS ANDERSON

21 October 2015: the date that Marty McFly arrived from 1985 in *Back To The Future: Part II*. As we approach that moment in real life, dubbed 'Future Day' by fans, we may be disappointed that flying cars and hoverboards have still not entered the mainstream. But there is something else to look forward to: new documentary *Back In Time*.

Producer Lee Leshen explains what the independent film is about: "It goes behind the scenes, and we have new interviews with key cast and crew, but it's as much about the cultural impact that the film franchise has had."

For director Jason Aron, it marks the end of a two-and-a-half-year journey, involving two Kickstarter campaigns. "If you watch the original trailer we did, it centres around this superfan called Bill Shea, who has two DeLoreans, one of which was actually used in *BTTF III*, and it grew from there," he recalls. "We had the support of Bob Gale [*BTTF* co-writer and producer] early on, who was helpful in tracking people down and seeing if they would be involved. I was amazed when Claudia Wells [who played Jennifer] agreed to be interviewed – I thought that was the biggest cast member we'd get."

One interview led to another, taking Lee and Jason deeper into the *Back To The Future* world. "Getting Christopher Lloyd was huge for us," Jason recalls. "And if he's on board, and he knows we're serious, that's when you can approach Michael J Fox – and we got to interview him at the start of the year. We ended up speaking to so many people, from Lea Thompson and Huey Lewis, right the way up to Steven Spielberg."

The crew visited the UK last summer and filmed a segment on the Secret Cinema screening of the original film in London. Fans here and around the world will be able to see the results for themselves on 21 October, when *Back In Time* is released on Netflix, DVD/Blu-Ray and on-demand.



Director Jason and producer Lee with the man himself.

"I guess when I realised that kids who had watched it when it first opened were now parents with kids who were seeing it who then became parents with kids," says Christopher Lloyd. "I knew it was something that was going to stick around."

"I knew we were on to something when I came out of my trailer I shared with Michael and it was wrapped in love letters from girls. I thought, 'This Michael Fox might be somebody!'" says Thompson. "We were shooting and shooting and shooting for six months, and then we heard that they were going to try and release it about five weeks after we wrapped, and so I had a feeling that they liked what they saw. And, you know, they put in so much extra money. They spent so much money on it that it seemed like they had something. But the first screening I saw where the cast and crew stood up and started cheering, I was like, 'Oh! This isn't how people usually react in Hollywood! This movie must be really good!' So that was a good indication..."

The concept of time is explored no end in the series, but it's a concept that leaves many bamboozled, including Thompson, who can hardly believe that three decades have passed since she was lusting after her son as 17-year-old Lorraine Baines in the first film. Her enthusiasm for *Back To The Future* hasn't dimmed, and is extremely infectious.

"It's kind of crazy! Age is weird that way," she says. "You know, when you turn around and look at how long



2015 PREDICTIONS

SELF-LACING SHOES

What BTTF predicted: Shoes will be able to lace themselves.
Do we have it? No.
Alternative: Nothing just yet, but apparently Nike is working on it. And there's some fetching non-self-tying lookalikes.

Doc fired up the car with the help of plutonium.



The DeLorean itself has become an icon of sci-fi.



you've been on the planet and what you've done, what you've accomplished and what you've not accomplished, it's just surreal. But time never feels like you think it's supposed to feel. It's so strange, but it's such a joy to still have something we did so long ago be appreciated... It's awesome! Really, creating happiness for people is a great feeling.

"It's something that I've been living with for over half my life. I did *Back To The Future* a long time ago, and I'm kind of used to it, but every year it endures, and then that new generation of people that weren't even born, their *parents* weren't even born! It's crazy! It's kind of awesome. I think the movie endures on several levels, and one being like I said it's not only nostalgia for the Fifties, but nostalgia for the Eighties, and I think people are enjoying that kind of nostalgia right now.

"I feel so grateful that a movie that I did when I was 23 had such a great part and established me as a good actress. Do you know what I mean? That was hard acting... Although, of course, sometimes I've probably not been great in other projects, but I think that it was an incredible acting challenge and not one that a lot of people get to do. And also wrapped in comedy to create those characters that were emotional, moved the plot along and were funny. I think it is an extremely challenging task as an actress, and having done this for 32 years, that is the hardest thing, to be touching and funny. I can toot my own horn because it was so long ago!" she laughs. "It's like a different person! But they were great parts and incredibly fun to play."

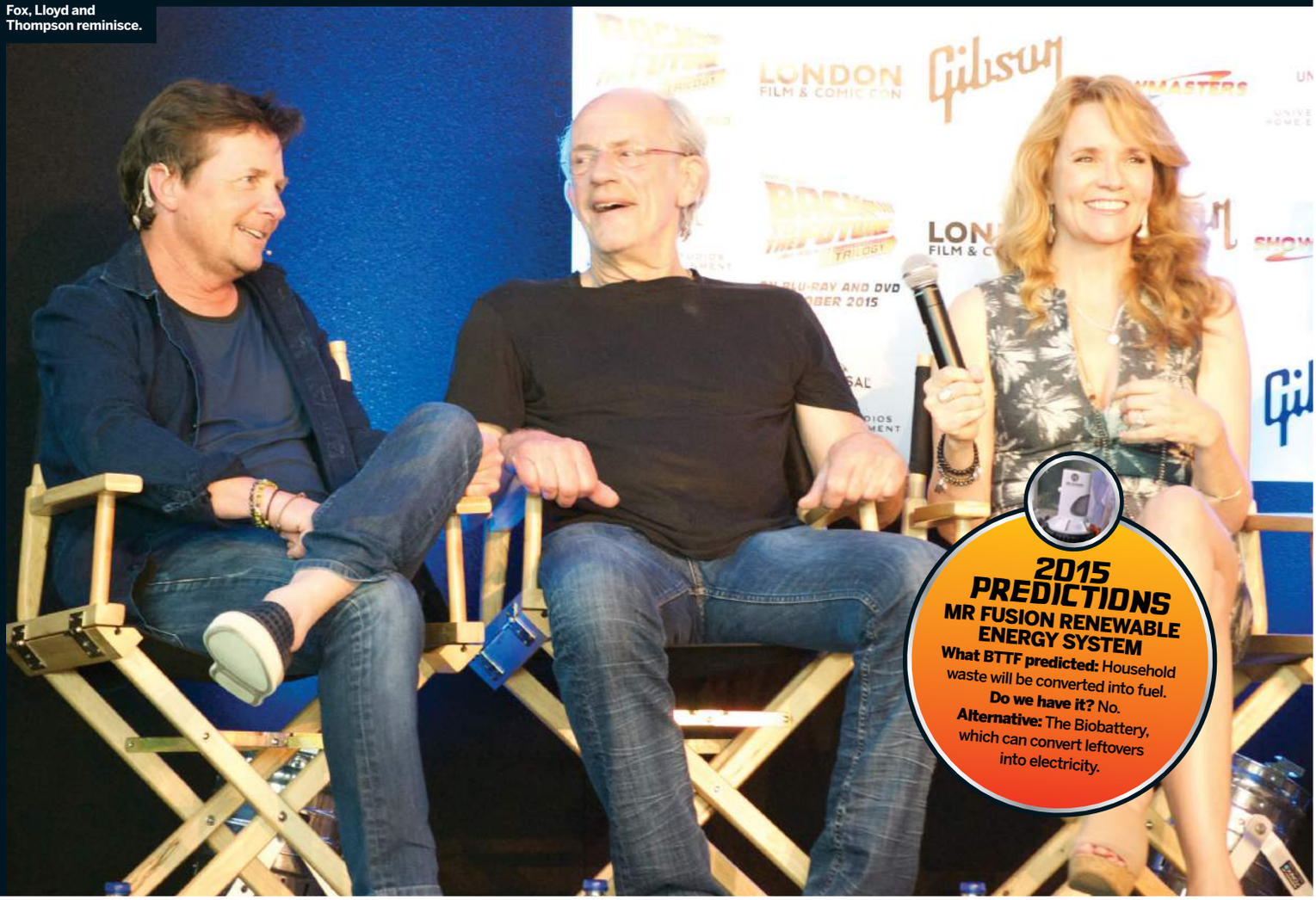
But for Thompson, playing Lorraine Baines at different stages of her life – as a horny 17-year-old in 1955, Marty McFly's alcoholic mother in 1985, Biff Tannen's busty wife in the 1985 alternate timeline and Grandma McFly in 2015 – had a downside: prosthetic make-up, padding and rubber breasts.

"[The make-up] took at least two or three hours. It's interesting, because it just feels really, really tight. It hurts your skin so much that sometimes it would pull up blisters... I remember



Marty got to live his rock-star dreams in 1955.

Fox, Lloyd and Thompson reminisce.



2015 PREDICTIONS

MR FUSION RENEWABLE ENERGY SYSTEM

What BTTF predicted: Household waste will be converted into fuel.
Do we have it? No.
Alternative: The Biobattery, which can convert leftovers into electricity.

CELEBRATING 30 YEARS

GREAT SCOTT!

How the cast changed over the decades...

2015



1985



1955

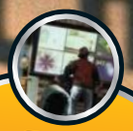


1885



* 2015 Biff travels to 1955 to give his younger self the Almanac, but in doing so deletes his own actions from the timeline. Biff is deceased in the 2015 version of the alternate timeline, meaning there would be no one to give 1955 Biff the Almanac, thus creating a paradox.

** The Doc in 1885 is the original Doc from 1985. Perhaps the reason he doesn't appear to exist in the future in 2015 (besides the Doc that travels there from 1985) is because he already made his life in 1885 with Clara. This suggests the timeline is unchangeable, which creates a paradox when we take into account the changing quality of Marty's home life in 1985.



2015 PREDICTIONS

FLAT SCREEN TV'S

What BTTF predicted: Box televisions will be replaced with huge, wall-mounted flat screens.

Do we have it? Yes. TVs can now even be curved, 3D or portable. In fact, with streaming services we're more advanced!

> "THE TRAILER I SHARED WITH MICHAEL WAS WRAPPED IN LOVE LETTERS FROM GIRLS"
>
> LEA THOMPSON





in the first scene that you see me in *Back To The Future*, where I have the cake and I'm this sad, alcoholic mum, it was really hard, because Crispin Glover [George McFly] was so funny! I couldn't laugh – I didn't want to rip the make-up off from the corners of my mouth, because then we'd have to stop shooting! I was to hold my mouth together and laugh! But it's also fun, because when you look in the mirror and see yourself looking so different, it's easy to act different.

"It really was the best part I've ever had, which was a great thing to be known for. In a lot of ways the hardest part was the young Lorraine, because believe it or not, it wasn't exactly 'me'. I had to have that weird, horny kind of energy going on, so I would sing *Mr Sandman* all the time. It makes you crazy! I would get into that weird mood. And I really loved the strange, subversive quality of that innocent girl in the Fifties, and so it was really a dream when I read it.

"I just was so excited, and I still have on my reel the Lorraine McFly from the second movie when I had the fake boobs when I said 'You were the one who wanted me to get these things!' No one would give me that part now that I'm that age! Or a little bit older actually... No one would give me that part. They always think I'm too nice. But the parts were so well written, and Bob had such a clear idea of the characters and what they were supposed to accomplish, and to be able to do such a lovely movie and have it be so funny and have so many amazing messages in it that are obviously enduring, you know. It just was a dream come true."

Like Thompson, Lloyd is in love with his character, and dedicated to making him the best he could be. Happily, he has had the opportunity to reprise Doc a couple of times since the series ended. As well as starring in all three *Back To The Future* films, he also played a scientist in Seth MacFarlane's *A Million Ways To Die In The West*, and has lent his voice to a selection of videogames and TV series. But despite the age gap between them, Lloyd actually found it very easy to get back into character. "I don't know what that says about me," he laughs. "I love him. I love the role. He's passionate about discovering things... in the opening sequence of the film he's got this mechanical automatic dog can opener. He's got these pots all over the place. He's got this music system that blows Marty away... His mind doesn't



Einstein became the first ever time traveller.



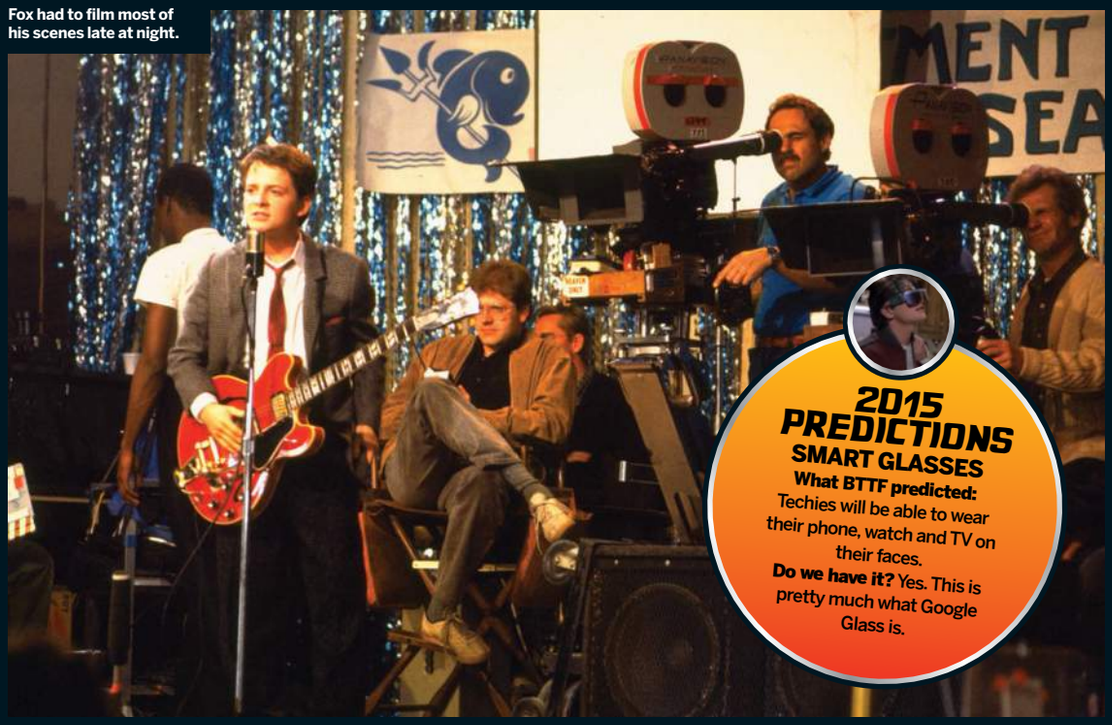
Meet Darth Vader from the planet Vulcan.



Love blossomed at the high school dance.



Hill Valley in 1955 was a sight to behold.



Fox had to film most of his scenes late at night.

2015 PREDICTIONS

SMART GLASSES

What BTTF predicted: Techies will be able to wear their phone, watch and TV on their faces.

Do we have it? Yes. This is pretty much what Google Glass is.

CELEBRATING 30 YEARS

stop thinking of new ways to do new things."

Aside from the time travel, Fifties nostalgia and rock 'n' roll, one thing that makes it so relatable and endlessly entertaining is the fascinating relationship between Doc and Marty. It's particularly interesting (and very strange) from a storytelling point of view: when we first meet them both, they've obviously known each other for a long time. Doc is a mad scientist with a flair for getting into trouble, and Marty is his young, clueless sidekick who himself has a knack for encouraging that flair. But as the film progresses, we get to see their first meeting – a one-sided first meeting, at that – and watch their situational association grow into a different friendship to the one we saw at the start. Three films and 130 years of time travel later, it's difficult to see where each would be without the other, if the pair had never met.

"I probably would have found someone," jokes Lloyd. "I'd have found someone. But Doc found Marty because he and Marty were inseparable."

"Doc was [Marty's] mentor, and a way to channel his energy into curiosity and exploration and discovery," says Fox. "Seeing that everything isn't as it appears to be, like this piece of junk can be part of this piece of junk, which can open a can of dog food... He just teaches him the fact that all things are possible. Because when you're 17 years old and you're in high school, a lot of things don't seem possible, and you keep running up against what you can't do and who you aren't and where you don't fit in. So to have this mentor, this guy who is not like every other adult he knew, but was really special and invited him to share his ideas and his adventures, I'm sure it resonated with people that age who were looking for people to accept them as they were and to include them in their plans."

It feels like there is a mentor-protégé aspect to Fox and Lloyd's real life relationship, as Fox continues to be in awe of Lloyd. He says: "I just want to say one thing about Chris: every sci-fi and fantasy film fan, you know that every fantasy story, myth or what have you, is built on certain rules. Magic powers, they work only under certain circumstances, or this has to happen, or you have to get the rock from the stone or whatever, so there's a lot of exposition and a lot of piping... You've got to explain that to the audience, and sometimes it's really tedious or hard to do. Chris is such a brilliant actor that all that stuff that he was saying as Doc, he was explaining how the film worked! He was explaining how the story worked and made it possible for everyone to get on board and enjoy it. It's like he said, 'Excuse me for the crudeness of this model,' and it was an amazing model that he's collected. It was all crazy and rambling, but it was brilliant, and I've never seen an actor be able to do that in my life. I've never seen an actor as good with exposition in making it entertaining and fascinating and fun to watch. He's a genius."

Like *Back To The Future* fans, the cast each has their favourite chapter of the three-part saga. Unsurprisingly, Fox holds *Part I* in high esteem. "It was such an overwhelming experience, doing the show and the movie at the same time," he says, "but when you step in with these amazing people, this cast and Bob [Zemeckis] and everybody... I was just five or six years removed from being a kid in Canada, thinking I was going to work on the fish docks or be joining the army like my Dad. And then I'm on set with Steven Spielberg and Bob Zemeckis and these amazing actors, doing this amazing story. It was just one of those things where you want to pinch yourself, but you don't want to wake up."







"For me it was *III*, hands down," says Lloyd. "The first and second ones were fun, but the third one was in the Old West, and I love that Old West thing. There was horseback riding, there was the steam engine, Doc had a romance... There was moonshine, oh yes. And when we did the dance for two nights, everybody was up all night dancing."

"My fondest memory as just a general memory was really enjoying how much glee [Robert Zemeckis] would get when he got to see what he'd created come alive," muses Thompson. "That just made me feel happy. I personally live for the director's vision. I mean, I'm just so happy when I make that work, so for me that was the best thing, watching him be happy."



"CHRIS IS BRILLIANT... I'VE NEVER SEEN AN ACTOR SO GOOD WITH EXPOSITION"
MICHAEL J FOX

2015 PREDICTIONS
VIDEO CALLING
What BTTF predicted: People will be able to communicate virtually face-to-face via satellite link.
Do we have it? Yes, very much so. In the form of Skype, Hangouts and FaceTime. We can even broadcast them to the world.

After everything, if Zemeckis and Gale were to pitch an idea for *Back To The Future Part IV*, would the cast be on board? "Are you kidding me?" gasps Thompson. "They don't make movies anymore. They only make these giant things, and no one is asking me to do them, so I would drop everything to work with them again! But I don't think that's going to happen. And if it did, I would probably be replaced by someone young, like my daughter!"

"I wish I had a reel or a gag reel of how many times I got clipped by that freaking [DeLorean] door," Fox says. "Take after take… Whack! Then I'd do it again. Then I get inside it and they had the flux capacitor and all that stuff there, and in order to drive it – it was the worst thing to drive – it had two gears and I'd slam forward and my hand would smash into the flux capacitor. My hand would be bleeding, my head would be bleeding, and I'd have to clean it all off to get to the *Family Ties* set. I'd be backstage at *Family Ties*, waiting for my entrance, and I'm going, 'Where's my camcorder?' and I'd be looking for props from *Back To The Future*. I almost called Meredith Baxter 'Doc'! Seriously though, if I had a clip of every time I was hit by the door it would be like 30 seconds of whack! Whack! Whack! So I feel like what it would take to get me back into the DeLorean again is a *lot*."

Now we've reached 2015, we should all use 21 October as an excuse to crack out the box set again, and marathon it with friends, pizza and Pepsi Free. We should celebrate the future and how far we've already come. Though it is a little sad that we don't have hoverboards, self-tying shoes or rejuvenation clinics yet, something else concerns the film's lead. "I thought the Cubs would have won the World Series by now," says Fox.

The Back To The Future trilogy box set will be available to buy on DVD and Blu-ray from 5 October, distributed by Universal Pictures UK.



Fox and Lloyd still admire each other 30 years on.

TOP OF THE POP CULTURE REFERENCES

Back To The Future is sprinkled with cultural references, but it quickly became *the* reference. Here are our favourite nods to the series in pop culture…

IN FILM



Teen Wolf *(1985)*
Both the Baines family and Scott Howard – Fox's character in *Teen Wolf* – live at 1727 Bushnell Street in Pasadena. The street Scott surfs the Wolfmobile is the same street where Marty was hit by Sam Baines when he time-travelled to 1955.



Bill & Ted's Excellent Adventure *(1988)*
When Bill and Ted's time machine enters another time period, it leaves a ring of fire much like the tracks left by the DeLorean.



Death Becomes Her *(1992)*
Helen takes her magic potion on October 26, 1985 – the same day Marty travelled back to 1955. And it's probably not a coincidence, given that the film was directed and produced by Robert Zemeckis.



Bolt *(2008)*
The address on Bolt's tag in 2400 Riverside Drive, which is the same street Doc lived on in 1955.



Paul *(2011)*
Tara: I forgot to bring my toothbrush
Paul: Baby, where we're going, we don't need teeth.

Jack And The Beanstalk *(2010)*
The headmaster – played by Lloyd – has a labelled flux capacitor drawn on the chalkboard in his classroom.



IN TV



Community Season Two
In the episode 'Messianic Myths And Ancient Peoples', Abed compares Jesus to "ET, Edward Scissorhands and Marty McFly combined".



Chuck Season Two
Chuck is heavily influenced by geek culture and references *Back To The Future* a lot, most notably in the episode 'Chuck Versus The DeLorean'.



Doctor Who Series Three: 'The Shakespeare Code'
Doctor: Oh, how to explain the mechanics of the infinite temporal flux. I know! *Back To The Future*! It's like *Back To The Future*.
Martha: The Film?
Doctor: No, the novelisation. Yes the film! Marty McFly goes back and changes history.



Doctor Who Series Three: 'Blink'
Sally Sparrow gets a message delivered to her by Kathy Nightingale's grandson saying that Kathy has been transported back to 1920, which echoes the message Marty receives at the end of *Part II*, explaining that Doc is stuck in 1885.



Lost: Season Five
When the survivors travel back to 1977, Hurley checks that his hand isn't fading just like Marty did when his parents failed to kiss at the Enchantment Under the Sea dance.



Supernatural Season Four
Dean is taken back to 1973 by Castiel in 'In The Beginning', and encounters younger versions of his parents. The episode is more or less an exact copy of *Back To The Future: Part I*, but with Supernatural-y twists.

His name is Agent.



© Getty



Between being killed and losing his hand, Phil Coulson just can't catch a break. We talk to the man himself, Clark Gregg, about Agents Of SHIELD Season Three…

WORDS **POPPY-JAY PALMER**

Was it difficult trying to play a character that was resurrected?

Well, it was brilliantly done by Joss Whedon, and he didn't know he had been brought back to life. He had been brainwashed into thinking that he had just had a very close call and an exceedingly pleasurable recovery in Tahiti, and it wasn't until glitches started to happen every time someone mentioned Tahiti. It was a kind of interesting plot line of Season One, and frankly how I was sold on doing the show. I loved his death in *Avengers Assemble*; I thought it was terrific. I love *Avengers*, and I didn't want to do anything that would minimise that loss, but when Joss called and said, 'Listen, here is what I'm thinking', he told me basically the scene from the pilot where he talks about his close call and then walks away, and Maria Hill says "He doesn't know," and they say, "He can never know," and I thought, "Oh, that's good." In mythology, you can't come back from the dead without paying a terrible price of some kind. That started to be revealed in Season One, and carried through much of Season Two, and I suspect will always be part of him, but he is not the same person he was, no matter how much he would like to be.

Is there anyone from the comics you want to see on the show?

There are so many of them. I went to the Marvel announcements where they announced the new *Inhumans*, *Black Panther*… they announced most of my favourite characters. Iron Fist, I was a huge fan of when I was a kid. I loved *Daredevil,* and they have done a magnificent job on that. I was a big fan, I've said it many times, of this guy Adam Warlock, and I'm suspecting and hoping he may show up in *Guardians 2*. I love that our show gives someone like Jaimie Alexander, who plays Lady Sif, a chance for people to really get to know her beyond just being, kind of, ⇨

Thor's warrior wannabe girlfriend. She gets a lot more to do on our show, and we get to meet a Kree warrior from time to time. That part of it, the secondary characters and a lot of the secondary villains like Calvin Zabo, and to have Skye be revealed to be quite a tremendous SHIELD agent and part of the Secret Warriors, that's very exciting to me.

Do you know what your involvement is going to be in Phase Three?
I don't even know what my involvement is going to be in Season Three of *SHIELD*! Even as the director of SHIELD, my security clearance doesn't get me any Marvel secrets. When I ask the writers of the show about something that I'm not supposed to know yet, the face they make is so similar to anyone in the MCU. If I bump into them and ask when might Coulson be able to explain his demise to his pals, the Avengers, it's the same look of just, "I'm sorry, there's nothing. Your security clearance does not get you that." I don't know.

You were a huge Marvel fan before you were cast as Coulson, so what's it like being a big part of the MCU?
It was a thrill! I mean, I saw the movie that they were putting together when Jon Favreau was making *Iron Man*. That was kind of my dream. I had loved *Superman* and *Batman* movies when I was younger, but I really missed the Marvel part of it because it was always a thing they have accomplished in the movie, which is a kind of a social conscience, a real sardonic humour and really an examination of how flawed these characters are. When I saw the cast, Gwyneth [Paltrow] and obviously Robert [Downey Jr], it just felt like such a home run to me for Tony Stark and Jeff Bridges. I thought, "That's the movie I want to see!" and to have them call me and say, 'There's a guy, his name is Agent, and we don't know much more than that. Do you want to come play a couple days?" and have it become this thing where, at the end, Pepper Potts is thanking Agent Coulson…

How did the experience of doing the films compare to doing the TV show?
They both have things that are wonderful, certainly the actors that I got to work with and the directors and filmmakers I got to work with in the features was amazing. And also having a day and a half to shoot that scene or this scene was really nice. We do half or not quite half of one of those films in eight days, and that's nuts and a bit exhausting, especially when you add the action and visual effects. But the one fight Coulson managed to get into in the films, he got murdered. Now when there are fights on *SHIELD*, he picks up a wrench and goes to work, and that's really fun.

> "They really are heroes of Coulson's, of mine, but I love them all, whether they're green or not"
> **Clark Gregg**



You lost your hand in the Season Two finale. How will that be resolved?
You know, periodically I saw *Mad Max: Fury Road* – so good! I actually I saw it last night, but I'd seen pictures where Charlize Theron had this tremendous, almost steampunk hook hand, and I sent pictures of that. Any time I see a cool artificial limb… some fans took one of my action figures and put a Mark V Iron Man suit hand on it, and I sent them that. There are a lot of pictures that have been made. They just have started writing again, so I don't think they even know for sure. I have a feeling it'll be this annoying sling for a little while, because it's really hard to do almost anything with that, and hopefully at some point, the Asian scientist (Claudia Kim) who was making the Vision in Age Of Ultron, I'm hoping she might show up with a spectacular, Vision-esque hand.

They can bring you back to life, surely they'll be able to grow a new hand!
Yes, it's true. I just hope it won't be as painful or alien-nightmares-inducing as the bring-me-back-to-life phase.

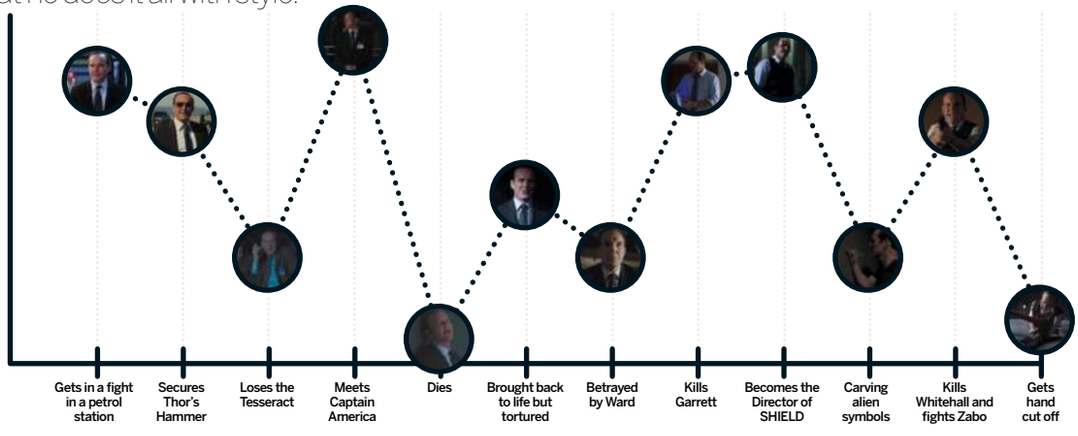
***SHIELD* has had some great genre guest stars, like Lucy Lawless and Kyle MacLachlan. Is there anyone who you would want to appear?**
We've had so many of the people I was really thrilled to have on. Samuel L Jackson's come a couple of times. I always love it when he shows up. Bill Paxton was amazing to have there. Kyle MacLachlan… everybody that has shown up, and Lucy! We read through the first episode and saw that she wasn't going to be around for too long, and we were all very upset. They managed to bring her back for a flashback, but that's too often the case, that someone great comes in and then you get the red pages, and red pages are never good. They're kind of the last-minute pages that let you know it's going to be your last episode.



Coulson survived the events of last season – minus a hand.

The highs and lows of Agent Phil Coulson

Coulson has the best of times and the worst of times, but he does it all with style.



There's some of the supporting characters in the films… I certainly wouldn't mind a visit from Agent 13… Anybody from *Guardians*… I don't know why Groot couldn't visit us! I don't know why I couldn't be on a mission with a raccoon!

Do you have a favourite Avenger?
Well, my feelings for Steve Rogers have been stated early and often… they certainly mirror my feelings for Chris Evans, but I always kind of felt like I was the weird uncle who was tasked with babysitting them, and I love them each in different ways. My SHIELD agents, Jeremy [Renner] and Scarlett [Johansson], the people who really are agents of SHIELD, I have a soft spot for. They really are heroes of Coulson's, but I love them all, whether they're green or not.

What's the strangest thing that's ever happened on set?
There's been a little bit of a pranking war that's happened, certainly between Iain [De Caestecker] and Chloe [Bennet]. Iain got his trailer filled with snow after a snow scene, and I think Chloe thought that she'd escaped retribution until one of the most obscene license plates in the history of Los Angeles was put on her car, and she didn't discover it for four or five days, which was basically inviting anyone who was looking at it to proposition her. I'm not proud of this, but she had gotten me somehow. She took my phone and posted a bunch of really lame pictures that were supposedly by me, and there may be a machine that maybe someone helped me get that generates really digestive, unpleasant sounds, and I might have had that taped under her seat during a particularly tense Quinjet scene, so that sounded like she was having some terrible gas. The train of revenge that never stops.

Agents Of SHIELD Season Three will air on Channel 4 later in 2015.

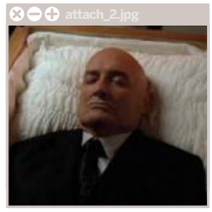

Skye (Chloe Bennet) will embrace her Inhuman origins even further in Season Three.

Tahiti is a magical place

In television, being killed off isn't the worst that can happen. Here are our favourite characters that died and came back in a big way…


attach_1.jpg

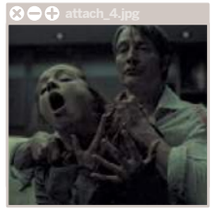
Mail
FROM: Agent T
SUBJECT: The Winchester brothers (*Supernatural*)
Targets Sam and Dean Winchester seem to be immortal. Their resurrection methods include reversing time loops, making demon deals, and Angels? Most likely enemy code of some kind.
END MESSAGE


attach_2.jpg

Mail
FROM: Agent T
SUBJECT: John Locke (*Lost*)
Reporting from the Shadow of the Statue. Survivor Locke was killed by Ben Linus, but showed up alive again. I've been informed it was the Man In Black's spirit possessing his body. No further comment.
END MESSAGE


attach_3.jpg

Mail
FROM: Agent T
SUBJECT: Bryce Larkin (*Chuck*)
I have received word that Bartowski's best friend-turned-nemesis Agent Larkin was killed while receiving the Intersect. Later turned up in a metal box, alive and well. UPDATE: Dead again.
END MESSAGE


attach_4.jpg

Mail
FROM: Agent T
SUBJECT: Will Graham, Jack Crawford, Abigail Hobbs, et al (*Hannibal*)
Everyone died. Most are alive again. Graham was gutted. Bloom fell through a window. Hobbs had her throat cut. Gideon ate himself. Of course he did.
END MESSAGE


attach_5.jpg

Mail
FROM: Agent T
SUBJECT: The Coven witches (*American Horror Story*)
WHAT IS GOING ON? Seriously, does nobody just die anymore? No take-backs! Oh god! I'm not doing this anymore. I quit. Over and out.
LAST MESSAGE


It remains to be seen what state Bobbi (Adrianne Palicki) is in after her torture by Ward.


Ward (Brett Dalton) will wage war on SHIELD with the remnants of HYDRA.


The fate of Simmons (Elizabeth Henstridge) has been left very much up in the air.




Season Two ends with Coulson assembling the Secret Warriors.



GOTHAM'S RECKONING

HAVING INTRODUCED THE PENGUIN, RIDDLER, CATWOMAN AND MORE, SEASON TWO WILL SEE GOTHAM'S ROGUE'S GALLERY CONTINUE THEIR RISE TO INFAMY. THE CAST AND CREW OF THE BATMAN SPINOFF TALK TO US ABOUT UPPING THEIR GAME, THE JOKER AND FINDING A WINNING FORMULA...

WORDS **EDWARD GROSS**

GOTHAM HAD THE MEDIA SPOTLIGHT ON IT FROM ALMOST THE MOMENT IT WAS ANNOUNCED. IT HAD TOP-RATED ACTORS, AN AUDIENCE WILLING TO WATCH AND a must-see premise, chronicling the pre-Batman days of Gotham City. What it didn't have, in many instances, was a consistency of vision, with great noir elements frequently undermined by jarringly scenery-chewing villains. In Season Two, however, the mix is going to be somewhat different.

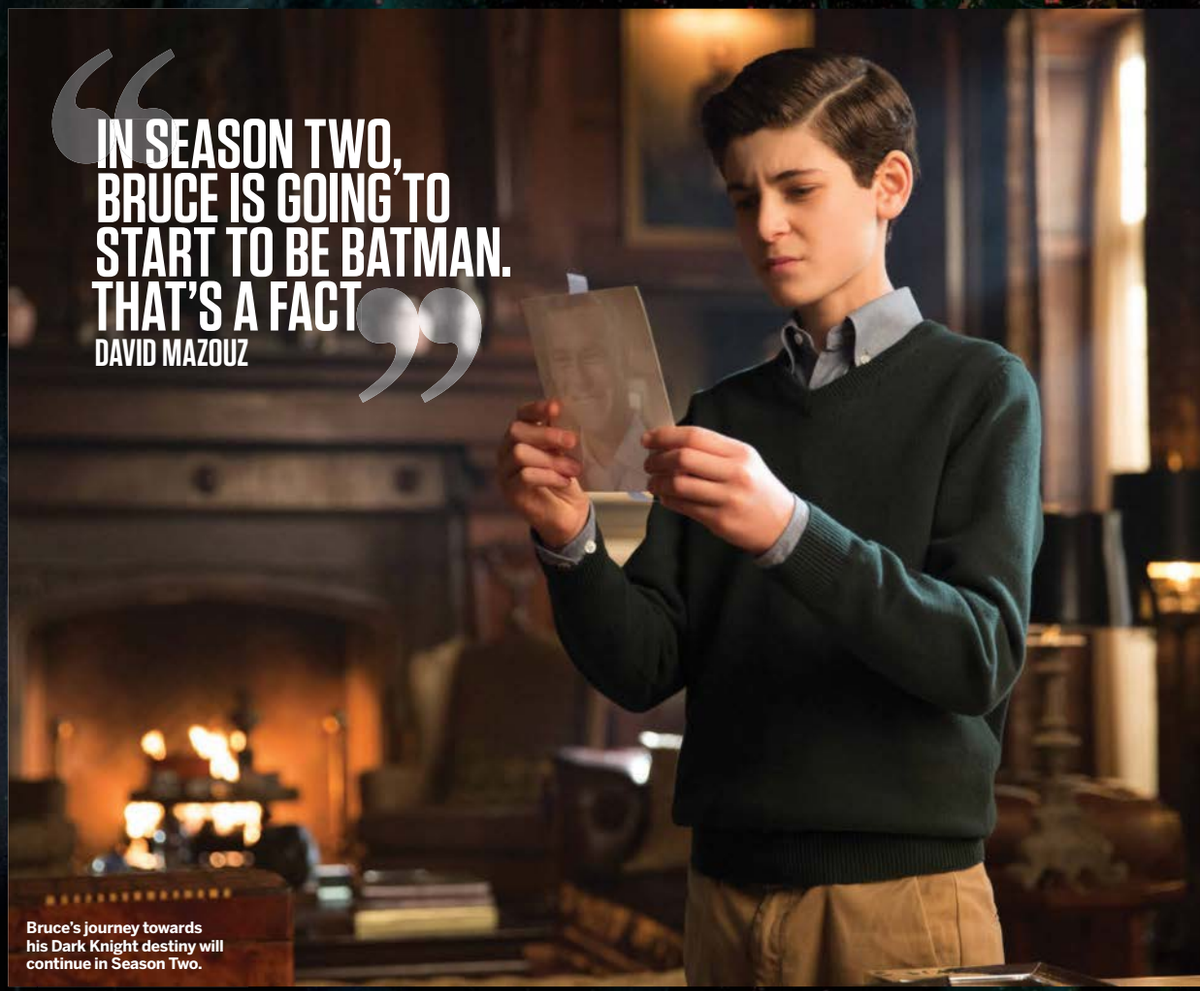
"I think with a lot of first-year shows, you spend a lot of time finding out exactly what it is," says executive producer John Stephens. "Is it procedural? Is it more police work? Are we going to push the boundaries of the supervillains' world and have people take drugs and get really strong? Okay, that's terrible, we're not going to do that anymore. Are we going to have a serial killer? No, that doesn't feel right. We kind of shifted around until we started finding what we were happy with. Hopefully when we do these shows, you're on the air long enough to find what that tone is, and I feel in Season Two we've really locked it in."

Executive producer and series creator Bruno Heller has done his own assessment of year one and how it has impacted on the approach to this year. "The world is so vast," he says. "There are so many storylines, characters and situations you can portray, that you can overstretch yourself. If I was going to criticise myself for that first season, it's a comic-book thing. You can stuff more into a comic-book world than you can a classical drama, but this season we're content with much more coherent arcs that go straight through the year. It's also partly the luxury of having a full order and knowing how many episodes there are going to be. We started out with the notion that there would be a procedural element. We think that the world is too large to allow for that formal structure. Every episode is going to be different. Every episode is going to be a little movie. Every episode is going to have its own energy and pop.

"There is a subtitle on the show," Heller continues, "which is 'The Rise Of The Villains'. It's very much about the transition from old-school, mafia-type villainy to the grandiose, grotesque, Gothic theme that *Gotham* is slowly moving towards. The crimes are grander and the villains more theatrical. Monsters start to come out a bit."

It's Stephens' feeling that the over-the-top elements in Season One weren't executed as well as they could have been. "There is definitely an evolutionary shift that's happening this year," he offers. "Where Season One was kind of a Falcone/Maroni mob version of *Gotham*, for Season Two we started taking a step towards the creation of supervillains. We do want to move towards that world. It's like boiling a frog – you want to do it slowly. By the time you arrive at those characters and if you want to do Killer Croc or whatever, you want to do a realistic version. You want to do something that helps create a world where that character could live. I think that will be exciting."

> "IN SEASON TWO, BRUCE IS GOING TO START TO BE BATMAN. THAT'S A FACT"
> DAVID MAZOUZ



Bruce's journey towards his Dark Knight destiny will continue in Season Two.







Like everybody else in Hollywood, the producers of *Gotham* are keeping a tight lid on specifics of the new year, though they do, in brief, mention a couple of the villains they're developing.

"We thought long and hard about this," Heller explains. "So many of the characters don't have origin stories. It's not just a question of enjoying going back to an origin story; it's who fits in a realistic world. Some characters you'll advance stylistically, but we found, for instance, the Mr Freeze story very emotional. That's one we're going to look at."

Stephens agrees. "With Mr Freeze, you want to see someone who's, above anything, empathetic. He does have an emotional story at heart. That's part of his origin story, and you want someone that you feel for, first and foremost. We will also see the beginning of The Joker, or a Joker story – I'll put it that way. We have a very specific take on how we want that story to play out. And it does play out in the first three episodes of the show."

"If that is indeed the Joker, he's in Arkham," adds Heller. "When Barbara Keen is put in the wing of Arkham – where the worst of the worst are kept – an event happens which allows him to be involved in the next few episodes. He gets to fulfil his destiny."

Of course, not all the villains will be new faces. Cory Michael Smith's Edward Nygma is one of them, gradually shifting towards his destiny of becoming the Riddler. For the actor, that transformation is somewhat understandable given the fact that the character is, in his own words, "a complete loser" that nothing goes right for. ⇒

"Being so tightly wound, being so frustrated and having blood on his hands… at the end of Season One, he just explodes," says Smith. "He has to change. He has to try something different. The beginning of Season Two will be him having to confront this voice, very literally this other person who is saying, 'Dude, take control. Do something. Make a choice.' He has to adjust to that and make changes. He has to find a new identity, so that's where we're at. We're not dealing with a villain yet. It's not someone having mal-intentions yet. He just wants to be happy. He wants people to like him. He wants love and respect. We're still with good intentions, but he's got to gain some power. And things are looking up if he listens to this alter-ego of his."

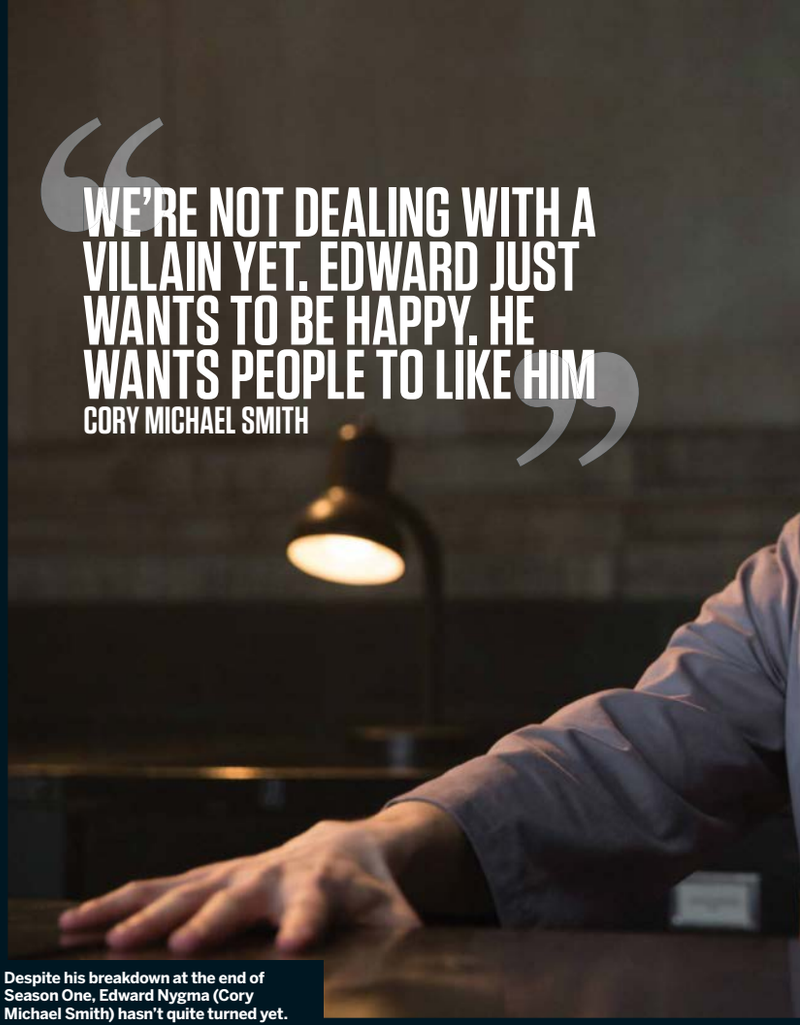
Power, of course, is not a problem for Robin Lord Taylor's Oswald Cobblepot, who rose to the top of the power food chain in Gotham by the end of Season One. "We start Season Two, and he's the king of the Gotham underworld," enthuses Taylor. "Falcone's out of the picture. Fish is swimming. He set out to accomplish this, and he did. But he's as smart as anyone else. He knows that once you get to the top of Gotham City, there's someone who's going to take you down. He knows he has to be even more vigilant than he was in the first season to just hang on to his power. I will say the biggest adversary coming up is a new character that we've introduced, Theo Galavan (James Frain). It's really not just Oswald. Galavan is going to be a challenge for every principal character in the show, because he just comes in and shakes up that whole power structure. You're going to see that. He's going to manoeuvre his way around there."

Power becomes a driving force of Ben McKenzie's James Gordon, who according to Stephens, is walking the line between good and evil, exploring just how dark you can go without losing yourself. "Some people," he proposes, "will go into the darkness and not come back. Jim Gordon will step over that line again. In his quest to try to save Gotham and restore it, he's going to try to acquire power, because the city is so corrupt. His feeling is, 'Only if I'm the most powerful person in Gotham can I save the city I love.' And it's a classic noir trope in that the more you look into darkness, the darkness looks into you. That starts to change him, and he has to sort of pull himself out. He's really going to be put through the ringer."

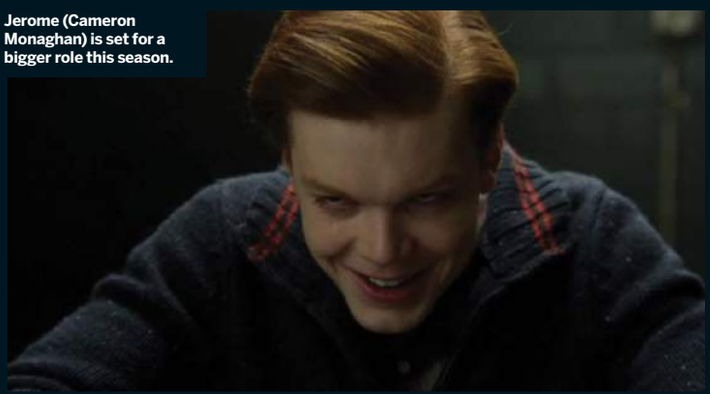
For his part, McKenzie notes, "We pick up Season Two where it's sort of a reversal of fortune. Cobblepot is the king of Gotham, and Gordon is at the lowest he's ever been. Because of the events of last season, he's a traffic cop and he's pretty bitter about it. As always in *Gotham*, though, things change quickly and the roles reverse yet again. Season One was the origin of Gotham as a city that was ruled by crime families. Now that we've sort of destroyed that, Season Two starts to explore the rise of the villains."

A central component to Gordon is his relationship with Bruce Wayne (David Mazouz), which is difficult at best. "They were on the outs in the middle of the first season, as Bruce felt betrayed by Jim for not living up to his promise to solve his parents' murder," McKenzie says. "They're slowly picking up the pieces. Bruce is not being completely honest with Jim, because as he discovers this 'secret office' his father had, he embarks on his own journey, and doesn't tell Jim."

Season Two will also explain how Lucius Fox (Chris Chalk) and Bruce Wayne got to be so tight. "How did Lucius come into his life?" asks Heller "What was his role in Wayne Enterprise and his relationship with Bruce and his father? He's instrumental in unlocking some of the secrets that Bruce will discover in what will later become known as the Batcave, which is now just his father's secret office."



Despite his breakdown at the end of Season One, Edward Nygma (Cory Michael Smith) hasn't quite turned yet.



Jerome (Cameron Monaghan) is set for a bigger role this season.





THE CHANGING FACE OF THE BATCAVE How Wayne Manor's basement has reflected the times…

BATMAN (1966)



Clean, tidy, light, and lots of fun flashing lights on clearly labelled machines. No one's getting lost or doing too much soul-searching down here.

BATMAN (1989)



It's a cave. There are banks of monitors for doing useful things. This is as Tim Burton as it gets, complete with lonely Michael Keaton eating soup.

BATMAN FOREVER (1995)



The Batcave got less terrifying and more toy friendly. It's still big and overblown, but there are fewer logistical (and real) nightmares.

BATMAN BEGINS (2005)



Nolan strips it back and makes the cave a cave. And not a Tim Burton cave either, like a real cave you would get in real life, because it's real.

©CG Textures



The journey of Bruce Wayne is evolving him psychologically into the Batman persona. "The theme of Batman is the idea of the duality of personality," Stephens details. "You can do one thing or you can be another thing, and you watch all these characters make that kind of shift. In Season One, Bruce was so forthright; always so honest. You're going to start to see him make a fissure in his personality. Like, 'If I'm going to succeed in what I'm doing, I have to learn to put a different face out in the public and become a different person. It will be the creation of the Bruce Wayne persona."

Mazouz, who has seen his role become much more extensive than originally planned on the strength of his performance, feels that the character's changes will be much more prominent in Season Two. "I don't think in Season One the psychological change was really happening," he admits. "In Season One he was just kind of breathing. He had an obsession start to form. He was hell-bent and very focused on his parents' murder and getting revenge, in a sense, but he wasn't really Batman yet. He was just a kid who wanted to know what happened to his parents.

"In Season Two," reveals Mazouz, "he's going to start to be Batman. That's a fact. He's going to have whatever is down that stairwell. He's going to have that. He's going to have Lucius Fox and Alfred. It's going to be the three of them working together to evolve him. When Batman is Batman, there is his Batman side and then his public persona, his Bruce Wayne side, which is a playboy kind of guy. In Season Two he's going to start to evolve that second persona... He's going to make the public think that Bruce Wayne is a loser. He's a playboy and a party boy, and he doesn't actually care about anything. Alfred, Lucius and Bruce are really going to, as Sean Pertwee likes to say, become 'Operation Good Guys'.

"There are so many villains teaming up," he closes. "There are mobs of villains. There are guys who are constantly teaming up, and others who are killing each other. Many of them are a team. In Season Two, you're going to feel that same sense of teamwork in Operation Good Guys!"

Gotham: Season Two will air in the US on 21 September on Fox, with a UK air date to follow.

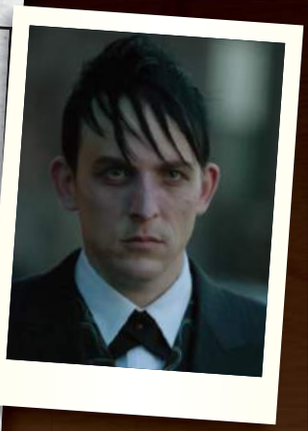
BATMAN V SUPERMAN (2016)



Snyder's Batcave looks gloomy but functional. There's lots of glass, running water and room for reflecting on the people you failed to save.

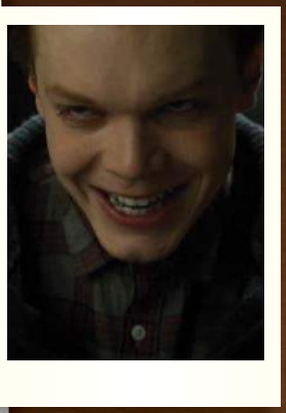
GOTHAM PD PAROLE REVIEW

Oswald Cobblepot
Status: Free
While we will have to keep an eye on Oswald, he has proven to be a useful source of information, although he's prone to acts of violence and he's definitely manipulating Gotham's mob scene. This might be a case where we should leave him out there and just pray to god that he doesn't kill anyone else.



GOTHAM PD PAROLE REVIEW

Jerome
Status: Imprisoned
Frankly, the more we find out about Jerome, the more sinister he becomes. We will obviously attempt to find a form of therapy that works for this homicidal young lunatic, but frankly we're probably going to have our hands full keeping him locked up.
Have you seen his grin? Terrifying.



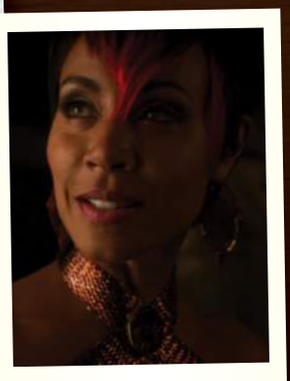
GOTHAM PD PAROLE REVIEW

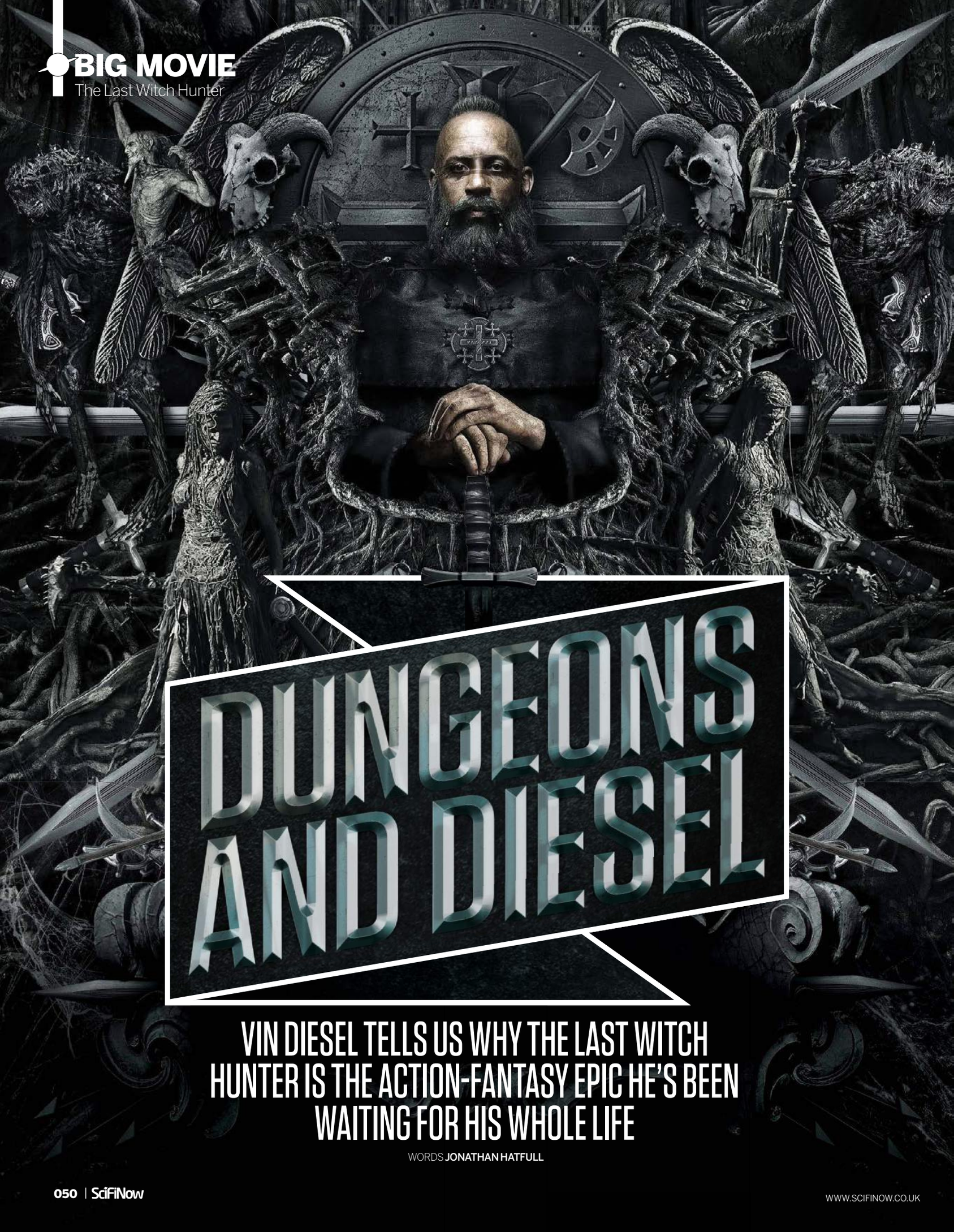
Carmine Falcone
Status: Free
Gotham's premier crime lord told Detective Jim Gordon that he'd retired from his life of crime. There was even a rather touching gift of a pocketknife, or so I'm told.
Historically, Don Falcone has been a man of his word, but he is a mob lord after all, so we'd best keep an eye on him.



GOTHAM PD PAROLE REVIEW

Fish Mooney
Status: Dead
Fish truly was a case of swings and roundabouts. She gave us dynamite intel when we needed it, but it turns out that she was a lot more deadly and a lot more heavily involved in the worst of Gotham's organised crime than we knew. Word of her death is something that won't keep us up at night, quite frankly.





DUNGEONS AND DIESEL

VIN DIESEL TELLS US WHY THE LAST WITCH HUNTER IS THE ACTION-FANTASY EPIC HE'S BEEN WAITING FOR HIS WHOLE LIFE

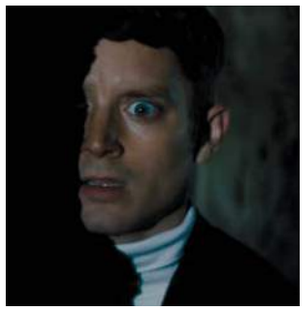
WORDS **JONATHAN HATFULL**

THERE ARE FEW SUPERSTARS WHO CAN MATCH UP TO VIN DIESEL, AND THERE ARE EVEN LESS WHO CAN EQUAL HIS LOVE OF THE GENRE. THIS IS THE GUY WHO parlayed the success of the *Fast And Furious* movies into making the long-awaited *Pitch Black* sequel *Riddick*, after all. With *The Last Witch Hunter*, Diesel finally gets to jump into a genre he has loved his whole life.

"I was drawn to the fantasy component," he enthuses. "*Riddick* is futuristic, and as much fantasy as I tried to imbue the *Riddick* series with, it's still futuristic. So this was the first time I was able to wield a classic flaming sword, and it was the first time I've been able to play a character that was immortal."

JOINING THE HUNT

After establishing not one, not two, but three franchises (*XXX 3* has just been confirmed at the time of writing), Diesel was on the lookout for something new. "I have a lot of characters out there that my audience appreciates and wants me to continue," he explains. "But at the same time there is always that voice that says, 'Can you give us some interesting new characters? We love the characters that you have; we love Riddick, we love Dom Toretto, we love Xander Cage, we love Groot. But give us some new ones too, when you can!' This was both an opportunity to service that… to service the long desire to do something in the fantasy space. So it's a modern action fantasy film that played to all of that."



> "THIS WAS AN OPPORTUNITY TO DO SOMETHING IN THE FANTASY SPACE"
> VIN DIESEL



The deadliest witches known to man…

CREATE YOUR CHARACTER

In *Highlander* tradition, Diesel's character Kaulder has lived for centuries, fighting his never-ending battle against the forces of darkness, but living forever has its price. "The premise of this story talks about the curse that [immortality] presents, and the loneliness that implies," he explains. Kaulder is a witch hunter for the ancient religious order The Axe And Cross, and Diesel tells us that the church's darker moments won't be overlooked. "I think what's fun about the overall mythology is that we're going to probably turn on the witch hunter because of all that we know about history, and the unavoidable history of the holy inquisition and all that the word 'witch' implies. It was one of my first notes about the movie: you can't just say 'witch hunter' without incorporating the fact that through time, in history, the idea of witch hunter has been an excuse to be oppressive towards… everything. Women, Jews, Muslims, Christians – anything different. "

FRIENDS AND FOES

Diesel has been surrounded by a very strong cast for his first foray into fantasy. Sir Michael Caine stars as the head of the Axe and Cross, there's also genre veteran Elijah Wood as a young priest training alongside Kaulder, and *Game Of Thrones* star Rose Leslie, who looks like she'll be stealing the show as witch Chloe. "Rose Leslie is so damn good in this movie," enthuses Diesel. "And quite frankly, whereas I might not have been ready to film so soon after all that *Furious 7* was, I did because they were able to get Michael Caine, and Michael Caine is such a dream of mine to work with. I went off and shot this movie literally right after *Furious 7*. You want to do a fantasy film – okay, you get one of the best elements of *Game Of Thrones*, you get one of the best elements of *Lord Of The Rings*, you get one of the best elements of *Batman*, and you're cooking!"

WARRIOR CLASS

If you've seen the trailer, you'll have some idea of the action madness that Diesel and director Breck Eisner (*The Crazies*) have in store. The star says that he can't wait to bring his favourite genre to the big screen. "The best fantasy we had as kids in the Seventies was Ralph Bakshi," he recalls. "I think Ralph Bakshi was a large reason why so many people got into *Dungeons & Dragons*, because of how great his animated *Lord Of The Rings* was. We were only ten, and I remember talking my friend into going to see this animation film, saying, 'We need to support fantasy at every level! Anything that's fantasy, we need to see it!' I think that there isn't enough fantasy out there, and it's exciting to play in that space and to finally do it. I can remember playing *D&D* and standing up and acting it out and wishing I had those props. Jump-cut to 2014, and I'm doing a scene where I have a propane tank strapped to my back and I'm wielding a flaming fire sword… I've come a long way from that kid rolling 20-sided dice save throws."

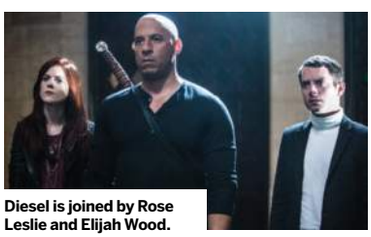
THE PEOPLE HAVE SPOKEN

Diesel isn't just one of the world's biggest stars; he's also incredibly engaged with his audience. When the fans speak, Diesel hears it. "I'm very active on Vinbook, on Facebook," he tells us. "And I love the feedback. A lot of the time there's feedback that says I need that new character, I need that new genre. You are the geek of all geeks, why don't you have a fantasy film! When I first met the writer Corey Goodman almost six years ago, we were geeking out about my years as a *D&D* player. And I can imagine that that played into his scripting of *The Last Witch Hunter*. And it's funny, when people started responding to the trailer of *The Last Witch Hunter*, someone said "It looks like a movie for nerds, by nerds!" And I thought that's kind of a cool thing to say!" What's more, there's plenty more of the world to explore after the credits roll. "Yes, that's what's so fun about it," he teases. "There's so much more to the story."

The Last Witch Hunter will be released in UK cinemas on 23 October.



The immortal Kaulder in happier times.



Diesel is joined by Rose Leslie and Elijah Wood.



Vin Diesel. Fighting witches. Sold.



MARS ROVER

We spoke to producer and long-time Ridley Scott collaborator Mark Huffam about bringing self-published phenomenon The Martian to the big screen...

WORDS **STEVE WRIGHT** INTERVIEWS **STEVE WRIGHT, JONATHAN HATFULL**





Great films that bring people together are a rare thing; unifying science fiction films even more elusive still. Especially in recent years, futuristic tales have predominantly taken on a bleak outlook, beset by one dystopia after another. *The Martian* seems determined to buck that trend, exhibiting the can-do spirit that the genre seems to have been missing of late.

The premise sees astronaut Mark Watney (Matt Damon) being marooned on Mars when he is separated from his colleagues and presumed dead after a particularly violent sandstorm. It isn't long before mission control back on Earth become aware of his survival, in the process spawning an Earth-wide mission to bring him back home – with Watney himself calling upon his extensive survivalist skills, going to a multitude of ingenius lengths to ensure his own survival.

"It is a tale of survival, teamwork, man against the elements and looking after our own, but in a place that is miles away from where anyone can help him," summarises producer Mark Huffam. "It's the ultimate survival movie."

Rather aptly, *The Martian*'s own story is one of success against the odds. Having initially been unsuccessful in his attempts to sell it to a major publisher, author Andy Weir persevered nonetheless, uploading it chapter by chapter to his website. By popular demand, he self-published it as an eBook on Amazon in September 2012, where it subsequently shot to the top of the sci-fi bestseller chart, before being purchased by publishers Crown for a six-figure sum.

From there, it went stratospheric. 20th Century Fox optioned the film rights, initially bringing *Cabin In The Woods*' Drew Goddard on board to direct and Simon Kinberg to adapt the screenplay. However, with Goddard departing to direct the now-cancelled *Sinister Six* movie, *Blade Runner* and *Aliens* director Ridley Scott was approached. "Fox sent Ridley the script, he loved it, and that was that," recalls Huffam, whose own involvement was confirmed, having previously worked with Scott on *Prometheus*, *The Counselor* and *Exodus: Gods & Kings*.

Joined on the producing side by fellow Scott collaborator Michael Schaefer and *Deadpool* executive producer Aditya Sood, production on *The Martian* began in earnest. Filming on the sets took place in Budapest, Hungary, while the exterior shots of Mars are represented by the extremely otherworldly-looking Wadi Rum in Jordan, which Huffam describes as "an extraordinary place." He further elaborates, "Ridley loves filming on location. He thrives on the challenge that the elements throw at him – there's nothing like a sandstorm to add a little excitement!"

In a film that presents these kind of on-set challenges, you need a game cast, and *The Martian* certainly has that in abundance. Leading the ensemble is Matt Damon, whose involvement didn't require a lot of persuading. "Matt Damon was involved from the get-go," says Huffam. "He was the first one who was on board – after that the rest of the cast started falling into place. It helped that the script was fabulous, and that we had Ridley directing it. Matt and Ridley between them proved an irresistible attraction for the rest of the cast." ⧐

And what a cast it is. Playing Watney's fellow crew members we have Jessica Chastain (*Crimson Peak*), Michael Pena (*Ant-Man*), Kate Mara (*Fantastic Four*), Sebastian Stan (*Captain America: The Winter Soldier*) and Aksel Hennie (*Hercules*), with ground control including Jeff Daniels, Kristen Wiig and Chiwetel Ejiofor. It's easy to see why they were attracted to this project – an acclaimed novel populated by an award-winning production team, possessing themes that anyone can identity with.

Huffam acknowledges *Castaway* and *Apollo 13* as touchstones, but another reference point is one that is more personal, considering that he worked on it (and the fact that it shares a lead actor). "Man against the elements was very much our ultimate blueprint for the story. You have one man attempting to survive against the odds – the steely determination of Mark Watney to survive, no matter what the impossible odds are – and then there's the help from NASA and the other crew members, who get together and try to bring him home – not too dissimilar from *Saving Private Ryan*, coincidentally! It's a huge, collective attempt to save one person, for all the right reasons."

One of the selling points was its purported adherence to scientific accuracy. Indeed, Weir's background helped. The son of a particle physicist, his father's career path rubbed off on his own interests, with Weir heavily researching mechanics, astronomy and the history of spacecraft in preparation for the book. Further enhancing the film's scientific kudos, NASA was brought on board to provide advice and reference points on all space-related matters – something Huffam greatly enjoyed being a part of.

"I totally loved it!" remembers Huffam. "Arthur Max, our production designer, went to NASA, where he started speaking to the people who had designed their spaceships. In the first week we were working from these designs. NASA were fantastic collaborators from the get go. They loved the book, the script and the design work. They were extremely efficient in turning round our numerous questions and requests. Bert Ulrich, our NASA liaison, was pretty amazing at dealing with our demands and requests. It has been very beneficial to have such a good working relationship with NASA."

Even with the benefit of having one of cinema's most acclaimed directors, some talented writers, an all-star cast and the US government's very own space agency on board, there were still challenges, chief of which being the conundrum that every director looking to adapt a popular book faces: choosing what to keep, and how to arrange elements that might be problematic when translated to the screen. Large swathes of the novel comprise Watney by himself, talking into a monitor. Coupled with the novel's science-heavy exposition, and adapting the novel wholesale becomes an obviously bad idea.

Huffam mentions getting around the first issue by telling parts of Watney's narrative from "several viewpoints." When asked

"Man against the elements was very much the blueprint for our story"
Mark Huffam



***The Martian* sees astronaut Mark Watney (Matt Damon) stranded on the Red Planet.**



Watney with his fellow Ares 3 crew members: Lewis (Jessica Chastain), Beck (Sebastian Stan), Johanssen (Kate Mara) and Vogel (Aksel Hennie).



Kristen Wiig stars as NASA head of PR, Annie Montrose.

One Step Beyond

Astronaut Tracy Caldwell Dyson on advising The Martian

How did you get involved with *The Martian*?
I got notified by our public affairs office that Jessica Chastain was going to spend the day learning about NASA, and they wanted a female commander type to walk through the mock-up training facility with her. I spent a half a day with her basically walking through our training facility and talking about life on board a space station, and she just asked a ton of questions.

So did Jessica basically want to know everything?
She wanted to know everything from certain ways that you control your body in the weightlessness environment to what's the role of the commander like on board the space station, to the things that I would wear while I was on board and what kind of activities. I was really impressed with the questions, she was very thoughtful, and you could tell that she had been thinking well before she got there about her role.

Did you find that it was as accurate as it was made out?
Yeah, I would say that trying to put myself decades ahead now and how the technology has improved, I do. I think that it was well thought out and accurate. I have to admit, I'm a scientist but I wouldn't have known the answers to all of those problems he was solving, but the things that I did know I felt it was accurate enough to earn my respect and keep me reading.

Are you able to enjoy films about space without being too critical?
It is a mix of emotions whenever I do see space movies, because I get wrapped up in the story just like anyone else would and don't pick it apart for the things that I know. But sometimes when things are very obvious, then it catches my attention, and I have to remind myself that it's a movie and focus on the story.

Is there one defining moment from your time as an astronaut that has stayed with you?
I think that one of the most unforgettable experience was doing my space walk. And the first time that I went out in the space suit and experienced that for the first time where it was just me in the suit in the vacuum of space, and there was nothing, literally except an atmosphere between me and our planet moving at 17,500 miles an hour beneath me. I could look down at my toes and see mountain ranges and continents go by. I also had a job to do while I was out there, don't forget! So it was one of the most bizarre experiences I have ever had.

what the biggest challenge of filming was, he jokingly responds, "Getting to Mars was tricky, but we managed it!" Even so, he acknowledges the traditional problems of turning a book into a screenplay. "You're making a sci-fi/science fantasy film, so you've got to have some license, but we wanted it to be as accurate as it could possibly be. And then you have a whole book that you have to cut down into a two-hour script. That I would say was the toughest element of working on the film."

Judging by what we've seen, it looks like those involved with *The Martian* have gone a long way towards meeting these challenges head-on. They look to have created a film that is simultaneously forward-looking, while harping back to more universal themes. "It is about having hope, and the surprising things people can do when they team up together." He summarises the root of its appeal: "great performances, amazing visuals, disco music and a lot of humour!"

The Martian will be released in cinemas on 30 September.



Watney drawns on his survivalist skills – which happen to include botany.



***The Martian* follows very much in the tradition of spacefaring adventures like *Apollo 13*.**



Damon was the first choice for the role of Watney.

Mars Attacks

How other big-screen expeditions to the Red Planet have gone pear-shaped





❶ Mission To Mars

(2000)

What Went Wrong: Vortex storm destroys their ship.

How They Escaped: By hanging tight in a greenhouse until they were rescued.



❷ Stranded

(2001)

What Went Wrong: An error with the altimeter causes them to crash

How They Escaped: They find a convenient valley with oxygen and water to bide their time in.



❸ Flight To Mars

(1951)

What Went Wrong: A meteor storm damages the landing gear and forces a crash landing.

How They Escaped: The natives help repair their ship and let them leave.



❹ Ghosts Of Mars

(2001)

What Went Wrong: The spirits of Mars' former inhabitants start possessing and killing everyone.

How They Escaped: By killing them right back.

HYDE AND SHRIEK

UPDATED FOR TODAY'S GENERATION, COULD ITV'S JEKYLL & HYDE BE A WELCOME THROWBACK TO TV'S CLASSIC ERA? WE VISITED THE SET AND SPOKE TO CREATOR CHARLIE HIGSON TO FIND OUT...

WORDS **ABIGAIL CHANDLER**

SUPERHERO' IS NOT A WORD YOU WOULD EXPECT TO HEAR IN RELATION TO DR JEKYLL AND MR HYDE. 'GOTHIC' MAYBE, 'MONSTER' DEFINITELY, BUT 'SUPERHERO'?

It might not be as strange as it initially sounds. ITV certainly didn't think so, as that is one of the key words being used to describe their new family adventure series based on Robert Louis Stevenson's classic book. As creator Charlie Higson points out: "The idea of *Jekyll & Hyde*, it's the start of that whole idea of the superhero alter ego... *The Incredible Hulk* is very much nicked off *Jekyll & Hyde*."

Higson, the writer behind TV shows like *The Fast Show* and *Randall & Hopkirk (Deceased)*, as well as the *Young Beyond* series of books, is the man breathing new, superheroic life into *Jekyll & Hyde*. His version of the story transplants the action to Thirties London, where the grandson of the original Dr Jekyll realises that he's inherited more than just an old mansion, that his alter-ego, Hyde, isn't the only monster roaming London, and that there's a government agency hot on his heels, intent on stomping out the monster menace.

As well as conjuring up images of the Golden Age of superheroes, the Thirties are associated with something much more traditionally Hyde-esque: the Universal monster movies. "I'm trying to put in my version of all those Universal monsters," Higson says. "There's my version of Frankenstein, my version of a vampire/Dracula figure, zombies, werewolves... I thought if we're going to accept one monster at the heart of this, then let's put all the other ones in as well."

It's easy to imagine the lavish sets – from the Victorian Jekyll family home to an art-deco government bunker – over-run with monsters, including a seven-foot-tall man with a lobster hand and a dog with a man's head. But really, there's only one monster we want to hear about: Hyde.

For Higson and the crew, finding the person who could encapsulate both Jekyll and Hyde was the top priority. "It was very difficult, because we produce a lot of Jekyll-type actors: repressed, polite, nice, diffident, Hugh Grant types, posh public-school types. We've got them coming out of our ears. But we've got very few Oliver Reeds."

In the end, they cast *Da Vinci's Demons*' Tom Bateman. The key was to find someone who could create a Hyde who was imposing and charismatic, but not too dark for a family audience. "Robert [Jekyll] is closer to myself," says Bateman, fiddling with his trilby between takes. "So I could really react in the moment to whatever the director threw at me. But for Hyde, you need to bring something to the table. I'd looked for inspiration in certain places, I quite liked Heath Ledger's Joker. It's the mischief and power... It's not just being evil for evil's sake."

Everyone involved knows that Hyde is who the audience will tune in for. Higson describes him as "unfettered" and "sexy". Producer Foz Allen compares him to *Game Of Thrones*' Jaime Lannister: "You open Season One with him buggering his sister and kicking a young lad out of an 11-storey building... and by Season Three you're in love with him." *Jekyll & Hyde* will probably have significantly less in the way of buggery, but the audience will be rooting for Hyde, despite his violent side. But how can the audience root for both Jekyll and Hyde?

"Our solution has been that Robert and Hyde in general want the same thing. They just go about getting it in different ways," Allen says. Higson tells us that while Jekyll will always try to solve problems with science and a cool head, Hyde generally just wants to punch things. "Well, that is useful, but that can't solve everything," Higson says diplomatically. So sometimes Jekyll and his logic are required, and sometimes something just really needs a good punching. That, we assume, is where the 'superhero' thing comes into play.

The theme of duality runs through the show, extending to everything from love interests to set and costume design. "There's a good girl and a bad girl, there's a good organisation and a bad organisation, but it's not exactly black and white," Higson says. ▻▻



As the series begins, Robert Jekyll (Tom Bateman) has no idea that he has a bit of a wild side...



The Strange Case of Tom Bateman

The star on taking on one of sci-fi's most iconic roles

Was it a no-brainer taking the part when you saw the script?
Yeah, it was. To my shame I'd never read *Jekyll & Hyde*. I obviously knew about it, but I'd never read Robert Louis Stevenson's book... I think what Charlie's done with it is amazing, setting it in this different time period with this backdrop... He's got a lot of action and adventure in it, but it's [about] the psychology of what it's like to lead this double life you can't control.

How do you make Hyde a character that the audience can root for?
Charlie has given him a lightness. He's funny. He's a funny guy. And he's having a great time. There's a great line that Heath Ledger's Joker says, he wants to watch the world burn – it's like that. And you can go dark with that, but that actually is a bit boring, because what drives the character is that no one is evil in their own mind. They do it for their reasons. He's not evil, he's just powerful, and he enjoys his power.

Are you involved in many stunts?
I punched this guy, one of the stunt guys, and he did this incredible on-the-spot backflip onto his face on the concrete, and when you're doing it yourself there's something different [about it]. Then when you play later scenes feeling that [power] is all part of it. I love that side of it. It's what I think is very enjoyable in the show: there's always action, in every episode there's a big action sequence. It's not just gratuitous, because the consequences of the fighting is what drives the characters to do what they do. I get to be this normal guy just reacting to these consequences, and then this superhero.

> "I LOOKED FOR INSPIRATION IN CERTAIN PLACES... I QUITE LIKED HEATH LEDGER'S JOKER"
> TOM BATEMAN

While Jekyll is romantically interested in 'good girl' Lily (Stephanie Hyam), Hyde is much more intrigued by Bella (Natalie Gumede), who runs a criminal empire from a nightclub. As for the good and evil organisations, there's MI0, the government agency run by Richard E Grant's Bulstrode, and Tenebrae, a society of supernatural beings who fight back against MI0. It's not yet entirely clear which is the evil one, although the creepy horned skulls and shrunken heads in Bulstrode's office don't bode well.

The *Jekyll & Hyde* story has always been used as an allegory to examine diverse issues, and this version looks at a dilemma we all face. "How do I live my life? Which bit of me is more important?" Allen says. "In [*Jekyll & Hyde*'s] case, the dark, hedonistic side, or the socially responsible, civilised side? Do you go out and get pissed every Saturday night, or not? And that's the struggle."

But as much as the team are interested in the philosophical side of things, they mostly just want to bring something fun to the screen. For Higson, *Jekyll & Hyde* is part of a personal quest that started with *Randall and Hopkirk (Deceased)*: "When I was growing up in the Sixties, we had all those fantastic shows like *The Prisoner*, *The Avengers*, all the Gerry Andersons, *The Champion*, *Adam Adamant* – fantastic stuff. And I loved all that. And then something happened in the Seventies. Kitchen-sink drama took over, and it all became very glum and realistic, and we've never recovered from that. British TV is kind of judged on how realistic it is. And you think, couldn't we have a bit of fun?"

Randall And Hopkirk was criticised for its lack of realism ("They're Vic and Bob, and one of them's a fucking ghost!" Higson laughs), but ever since *Doctor Who* hit upon the magic formula of fantasy mixed with believable characters and relationships, family shows have been flourishing – although few hit the level of *Who*.

Higson confesses that he didn't get it quite right with *Randall And Hopkirk*, but he has high hopes for *Jekyll & Hyde*. "It's a big, bold, exciting, fantasy, action, adventure series of the type that we don't make enough of here." Higson gestures with disbelief at the sets all around him. "I walk in here, we've got two soundstages full of all these amazing sets, you just think: I'm responsible for all this! Hundreds of people beavering away. And it is fantastic. ITV have been really behind it, and got a big budget for it, so it has been really exciting to do."

As we talk, Higson, appropriately, is sitting in front of the balcony of Bella's club, with the word 'Empire' spelt out in lights behind him. And he grins like a man who is immensely proud of his.

Jekyll & Hyde will air on ITV1 in September.



We meet Jekyll in Thirties Ceylon before he learns of his monstrous family history.



Jekyll might not agree with the company Hyde keeps: Bulstrode (Richard E Grant) and Bella (Natalie Gumede)







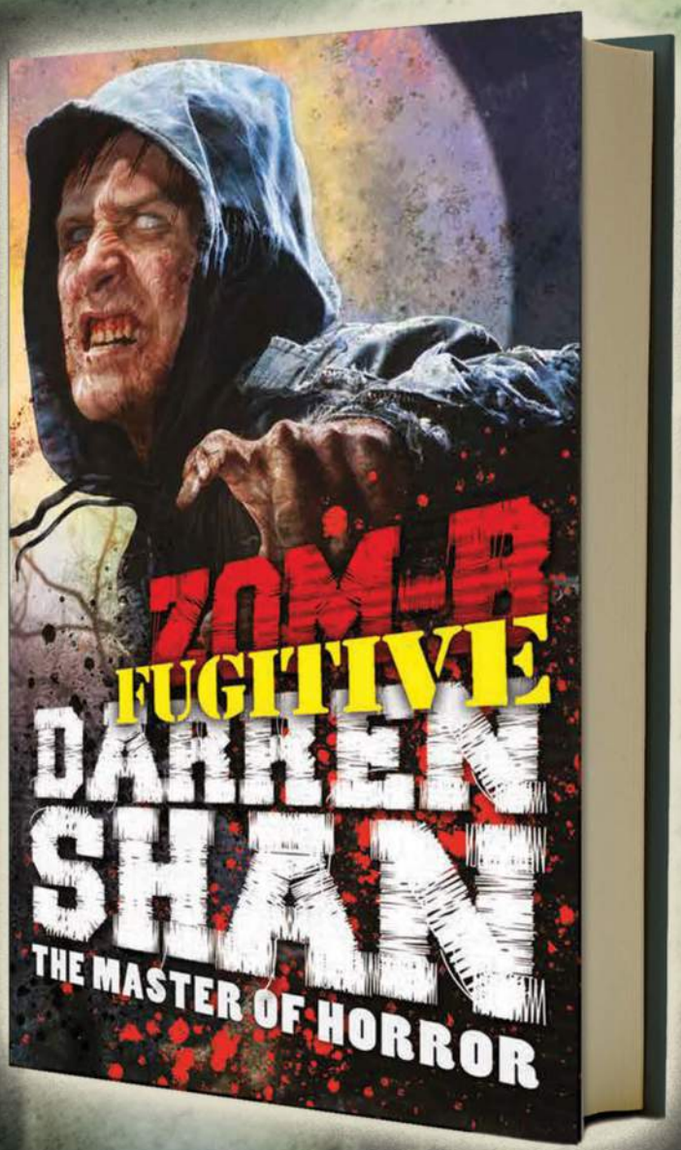
MI0: But are Bulstrode and Tom Rhys Harries' Sackler a force of good or evil?

> "ITV HAVE BEEN REALLY BEHIND IT... SO IT HAS BEEN REALLY EXCITING TO DO"
> CHARLIE HIGSON

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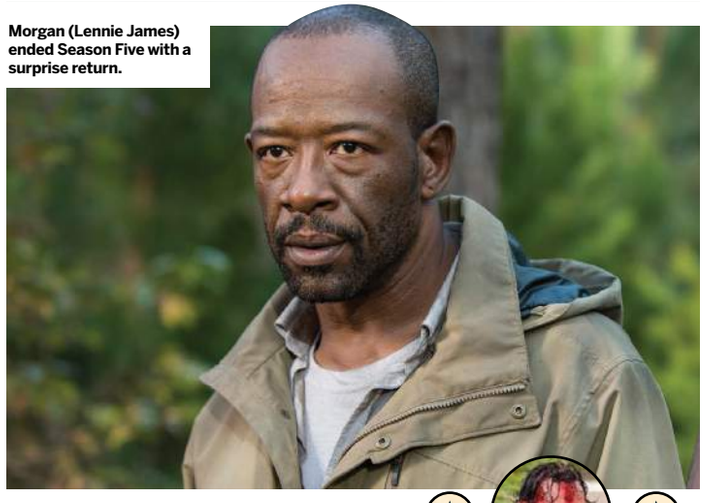
COMMUNITY SERVICE

AFTER A REUNION, A PUNCH-UP AND AN EXECUTION, THINGS ARE REALLY GETTING SERIOUS IN THE WALKING DEAD FOR SEASON SIX. WE TALK TO EXECUTIVE PRODUCER GREG NICOTERO, SHOWRUNNER SCOTT M GIMPLE AND MORE ABOUT THE BACKLASH FROM SEASON FIVE AND WHAT'S ON THE WAY FOR ALEXANDRIA...

WORDS **POPPY-JAY PALMER** INTERVIEWS **JONATHAN HATFULL, BARTOSZ CZARTORYSKI**



Daryl (Norman Reedus) is still fighting to survive the end of the world.



Morgan (Lennie James) ended Season Five with a surprise return.



Maggie (Lauren Cohan) has got Glenn's back.

THE WALKING DEAD HAS BEEN A CHAMPION OF HORROR FROM THE GET-GO. IT TOOK WHAT WAS PRETTY A PRETTY NICHE INTEREST THING AND BROUGHT IT TO THE masses, averaging 5-6 million US viewers with its first season. Five seasons on, it is pulling in threefold that. The appeal is universal. Anyone can enjoy a zombie apocalypse. The only viewing requirement is a strong stomach. Just when it seems like the show can't get any more gory, someone gets their foot hacked off and eaten. Characters drop like flies. If Season Five proved anything it's that no one is safe, and each death is more horrible than the last.

A real turning point last season was the death of Noah (Tyler James Williams). Though he hadn't been in the series for long – he joined the group after Beth was shot and killed half a season ago – his passing made quite an impact. After being torn apart by walkers in front of Glenn (Steven Yeun), he became a symbol of lost hope.

"That's one of the first deaths that we've ever done where there was a character that was in that close of a proximity," explains Greg Nicotero, the show's special effects make-up artist, executive producer and director. "The fact that Glenn is protected by the revolving door and Noah allowed Glenn to experience his death and also feel the futility of not being able to help, and watch it happen. It was something that was important, and it's funny, because a lot of people have talked about how gruesome and how horrible that death was, but the purpose of it was for Glenn to witness his friend torn apart in front of him and how that changes him, because we really get a sense that Glenn… he's a bit lost, you know?

"In episode nine, when Tyreese (Chad L Coleman) dies, Glenn basically says to Rick, 'Listen, I'm not the guy I was at the beginning of this when we left Terminus.' If you remember in Terminus, Glenn stops and says, 'We have to open this train car, we have to let these people out, that's who we are.' And now that's not who they are. Now he's basically saying, 'Listen, I wouldn't open that train car door now, I would have just left them, because that's what we need to do to survive.' So the fact that he watches his friend torn apart in front of him has a tremendous emotional impact on him."

Yeun believes Glenn, like the rest of the group, still has a long way to go. "We have six seasons, and we should be at an old show stage, especially for a serialised show," he says. "We always thought we may hit our ceiling at three or four and then just break down. But I'll say, being on the inside, not just saying this because I love the show. Sincerely, we are telling better stories than we ever have before. I love theatre, but I couldn't do prolonged theatre, because I'd get so anxious about doing the same thing over and over. I'm genuinely so excited for this season, to be on set every single time, because something is happening. I don't know what's happening, I don't know what it is, it's the writing, it's the acting… but we are like a fine wine that continues to age."

When Rick (Andrew Lincoln), Carl (Chandler Riggs), Daryl (Norman Reedus) and the rest of the gang first arrived in Alexandria, it looked like all their prayers had been answered. After the prison, the road to Terminus, Terminus itself and Father Gabriel's church, they had finally found a place that they could possibly call home. It had water, it had electricity, and it had community spirit. It even had Christmas parties. But like everywhere else they've been, the group doesn't like it and maintain their collective 'trust no one but yourself' mindset. Like everywhere ⇨



WELCOME TO THE RICKTATORSHIP

If you want to survive the end of the world, you're going to have to live by Rick's rules. This isn't a democracy any more

Rick makes the rules.

Only Rick can break the rules.

It's us and the dead. We survive this by pulling together.

Everyone gets assigned babysitting duty. This is not optional.

If you have arms you have to learn how to use a gun.

If in doubt, shoot to kill.

If you do something Rick doesn't like, you're going to pay for it.

Brush your teeth.

else, Alexandria had a strange effect on the group's character development.

"I remember reading the script where Carol starts going undercover and she's playing the homemaker, and I thought, 'Wow, that's really weird,' but it's such a shock," Nicotero tells us. "Even when we shot the scene with her and Daryl where she comes out onto the porch and Daryl looks at her and she's like, 'Going off to make the casseroles!' And it was ridiculous to see her dressed that way, and seeing them clean and without any blood or dirt or sweat on them. Then Carol comes out with these pastel colours, and I think we all had the exact same reaction. Norman ad-libbed that great line, 'You look ridiculous!' as she walks away. It was such a shock, but when you really think about what Carol's doing, and you think 'Okay, Carol's preparing herself as a sort of undercover agent.'

"It was a fascinating move for her to make, because she's doing it to protect her group. And Rick is doing what he needs to do to protect his group. So I love that everybody has different reactions to what's going on. Michonne is desperate to find somewhere to live, so she's probably one of the first that's going to be on board, and then you have people like Carl, who says, 'I'm worried that if we stay here we're going to get weak.' So they actually go outside of the gates, people like Sasha and Carl go outside and kill walkers just so they don't lose the edge that they have from having lived out there."

Similarly, the residents of Alexandria have also had their lives turned upside down since the old gang showed up and disturbed the peace. With the two groups pushed together and entwined in each other's lives, everyone is suspicious and everyone is a liability.

"They found a safe place now, but that doesn't necessarily mean that if that place is safe now, that that place is going to be safe [in] a couple of months," says Nicotero. "It just seems like once Rick and his group got there, there's a lot of weird shit that's happening at Alexandria, and the people that live there blame them. The people that live there are like, 'Listen, we were fine until you assholes got here. And now that you're here, we should have never brought you in because now people are dying. There are walkers that could potentially have been attracted to this place because of them,' so it's a very unique contrast that we're showing, because Rick and his people look at them as if they're lambs, and they look at Rick and his people as if they're killers.

"[Showrunner] Scott Gimple is a good student of the graphic novel, and I really think that part of the way that we keep it fresh is by not having the characters do the same thing over and over again," he says. "We're able to keep our characters evolving. Looking at where Rick is in Season Five as opposed to where Rick is in Season One is a great gauge to see who he's become, who Glenn has become and who Daryl has become. So I'm really proud of the fact that we've been able to do that quite consistently."

"There's lots of horror, lots of intense emotional things that happen on the show, and actors are dragged through a lot," says Gimple. "People do that in movies, and they're done, go off and do something else. But this is their life for the good part of the year. And I try to honour that. It's not for the faint of heart." That said, hearts are going to get a lot fainter for Season Six considering what Gimple has in store for the characters – especially with the newly introduced Wolves on the loose. "They're not going to be emotionally in the same place at the end of the season. None of these folks."

"THEY'RE NOT GOING TO BE EMOTIONALLY IN THE SAME PLACE AT THE END"
SCOTT M GIMPLE



The zombies are set to get even more gruesome.



The introduction of the Wolves set up a new mystery for Season Six.

Executive producers David Alpert and Gale Ann Hurd agree that things are getting darker. Alpert says: "The gang has been on the road, never really knowing if they are fully safe. They found a place that, at least for a moment, is a semblance of safety. Not all people may do so well with that."

"It's tough. We never want see anyone die, and discussions in the writers' room are very heated," adds Hurd. "The truth is we have the biggest cast we ever had before. We have like 18 regulars now. That's the biggest cast you'd see on most shows!"

Season Six also sees the return of Morgan (Lennie James). After first appearing early on in Season One, it was two seasons until we saw him again. Another glimpse of him at the end of the Season Five mid-season finale set up the Morgan-centric 'Conquer'. We're sure to see a lot more of him – and where he's been – in this coming season.

"As a matter of fact, I do believe that we had initially intended on Morgan's return to be much sooner, but due to his availability we were unable to secure him as we had wanted to," says Nicotero, "So it's pretty exciting. We keep upping the stakes every season, we keep pulling out bigger and bigger story arcs, and we're taking bigger swings. And we keep pulling it off!"

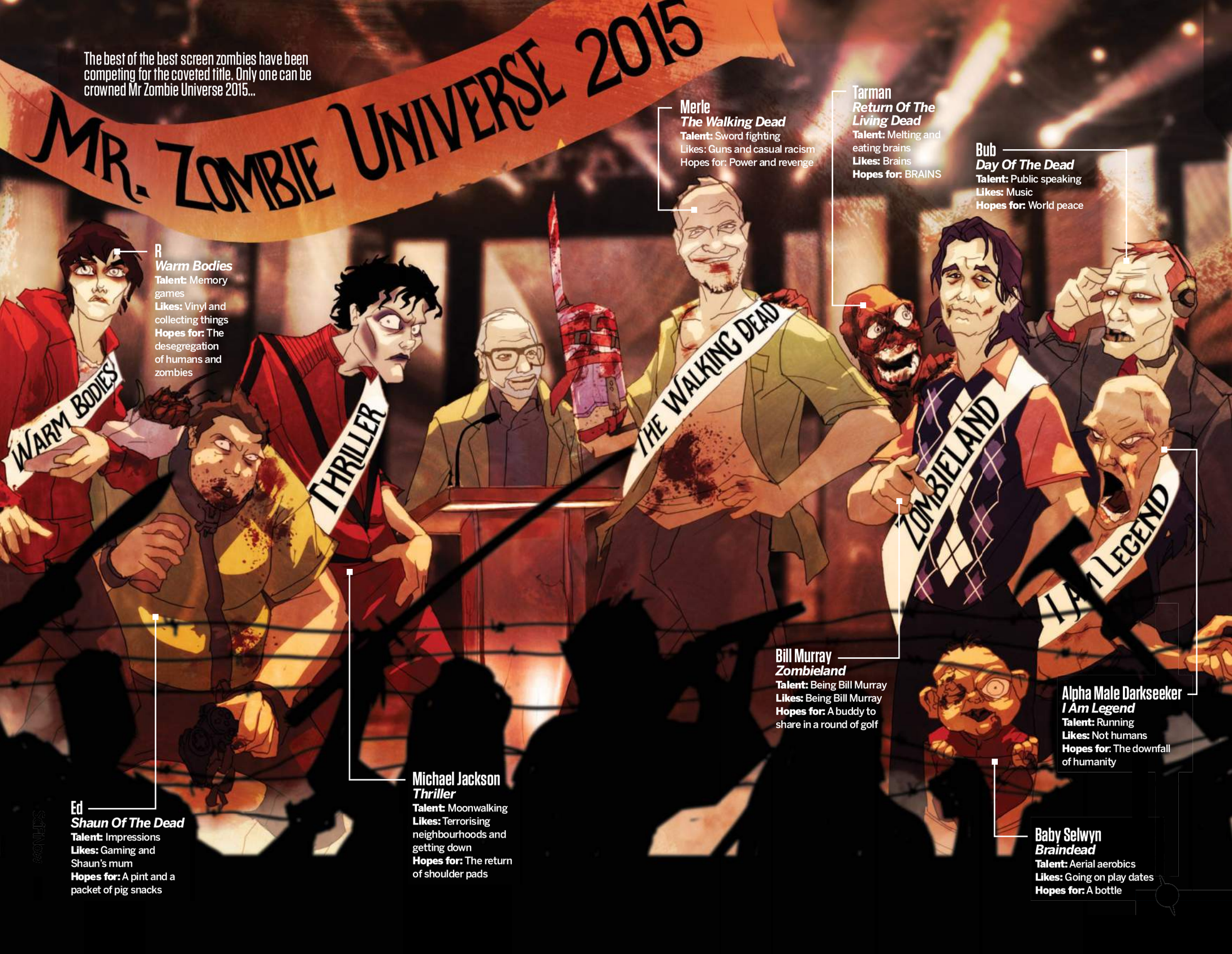
The Walking Dead Season Six will premiere on 12 October on FOX.



Rick (Andrew Lincoln) is focused on keeping Alexandria safe.

Mr. Zombie Universe 2015

The best of the best screen zombies have been competing for the coveted title. Only one can be crowned Mr Zombie Universe 2015...



R
Warm Bodies
Talent: Memory games
Likes: Vinyl and collecting things
Hopes for: The desegregation of humans and zombies

Merle
The Walking Dead
Talent: Sword fighting
Likes: Guns and casual racism
Hopes for: Power and revenge

Tarman
Return Of The Living Dead
Talent: Melting and eating brains
Likes: Brains
Hopes for: BRAINS

Bub
Day Of The Dead
Talent: Public speaking
Likes: Music
Hopes for: World peace

Ed
Shaun Of The Dead
Talent: Impressions
Likes: Gaming and Shaun's mum
Hopes for: A pint and a packet of pig snacks

Michael Jackson
Thriller
Talent: Moonwalking
Likes: Terrorising neighbourhoods and getting down
Hopes for: The return of shoulder pads

Bill Murray
Zombieland
Talent: Being Bill Murray
Likes: Being Bill Murray
Hopes for: A buddy to share in a round of golf

Alpha Male Darkseeker
I Am Legend
Talent: Running
Likes: Not humans
Hopes for: The downfall of humanity

Baby Selwyn
Braindead
Talent: Aerial aerobics
Likes: Going on play dates
Hopes for: A bottle

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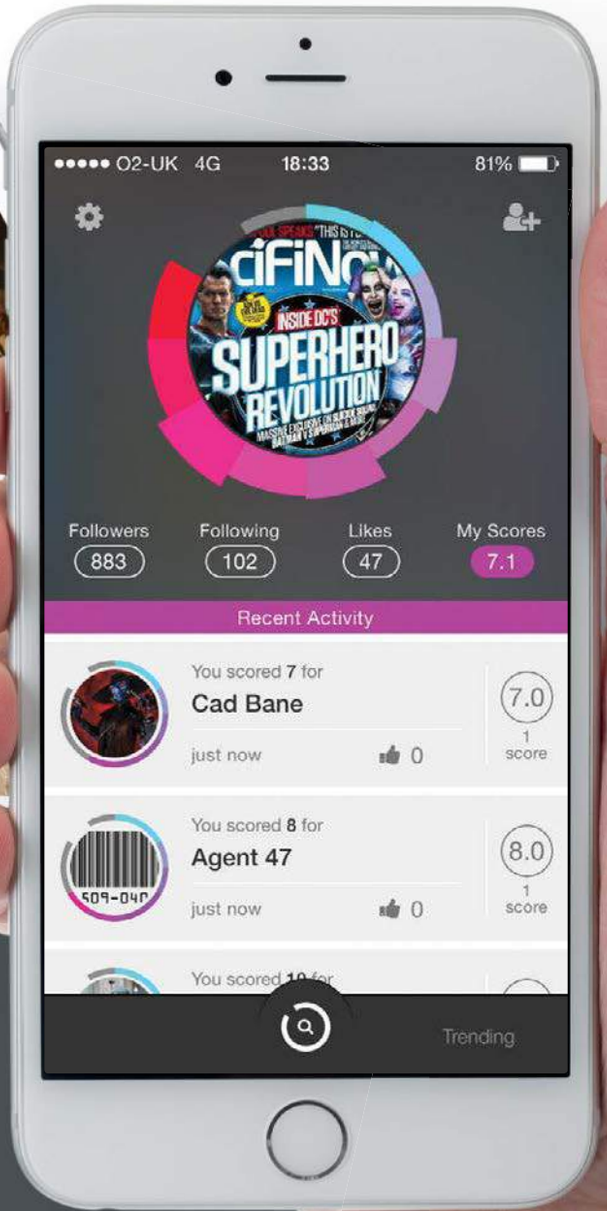


Steve

Steve Wright
Deputy Editor

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You can score absolutly anything on Just a Score. Our favourite this month was seeing how you rated both Agent 47 and other on-screen killers...

- 10 — SciFiNow scored **10** for Boba Fett
- 8 — SciFiNow scored **8** for Agent 47
- 7 — SciFiNow scored **5** for Cad Bane
- 4 — SciFiNow scored **4** for Zam Wesell
- 2 — SciFiNow scored **2** for Hitman: Agent 47
- 1 — SciFiNow scored **1** for Judge Rico in Judge Dredd



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SciFiNow Reviews

Our thoughts on the pick of the entertainment releases out this month

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TOP 10s Read our lists relating to our favourite genre shows, and give your thoughts on whether we were right

AWARD EXPLAINED THE 'MUST SEE NOW' AWARD GOES TO REVIEWS THAT SCORE EIGHT OR MORE...

SciFiNow Must see now!

68 HITMAN: AGENT 47

"STRIPS THE PREMISE OF ANY IDENTITY, SAVE FOR A RED TIE AND A PAIR OF GUNS"

TRIVIA RUPERT FRIEND STUDIED FIGHTING FOR THE LEAD ROLE WITH WORLD-CHAMPION BOXER MICHAEL OLAJIDE JR.

FILM INFO

Released
Out now
Certificate
15
Director
Aleksander Bach
Screenwriters
Skip Woods, Michael Finch
Cast
Rupert Friend, Hannah Ware, Zachary Quinto, Ciarán Hinds
Distributor
20th Century Fox
Running Time
96 mins





HITMAN: AGENT 47

Firing blanks

We think it's safe to say that the world wasn't crying out for a *Hitman* movie reboot.

2007's *Hitman* was a pretty by-the-numbers action flick that came and went without causing much of a stir – aside from being roundly panned as yet another sub-par videogame film – but it apparently did enough to warrant another, revised take on the franchise. Enter *Hitman: Agent 47*.

First-time director Aleksander Bach's reboot begins rather inauspiciously, with a laboured voiceover and graphics combo that explains the origin of the film's titular assassin at length. 47 was the product of a secret program led by a geneticist named Litvenko, who has since disappeared; though typically shadowy forces are apparently close to finding him. An expository introduction isn't necessarily a bad thing, but unfortunately the storytelling doesn't get any more nuanced from here on in.

This time around it's Rupert Friend who dons the suit and red tie, and though the Brit has shown he has action chops via his work on *Homeland*, he doesn't make for a terribly



captivating Agent 47 – a character who isn't exactly known for exuding charisma at the best of times. Friend is tasked with tracking down Hannah Ware's 'mysterious' Katia van Dees, who is somehow linked to Litvenko, while fending off a rival assassin played by the wooden Zachary Quinto, but the bulk of his screen time is spent shooting and spouting cringeworthy one-liners – none of which makes for particularly good viewing.

Directorially, Bach's debut demonstrates a few moments of flair, but aside from some disorienting montage sequences and a couple of nicely choreographed chases, *Agent 47* looks pretty bland. The problem extends to the set design too, which is probably the closest aspect to the source material in that everything possesses a generic videogame-environment sheen.

Moreover, it hasn't learned from its predecessor's mistakes. The original *Hitman* was heavily criticised for its poor scripting and inane dialogue, and the same problems are even more evident here – probably because screenwriter Skip Woods was allowed to return after penning the first film. Ware and Friend have minimal chemistry, Quinto's leaden delivery isn't helped by the bland lines he's given, and even fine actors like Ciarán Hinds aren't given enough scenery to chew to at least make things enjoyably ridiculous.

In fact, some more ridiculousness would go a long way towards making *Agent 47* a better, or at least a more entertaining, film. Instead, however, we're left with a movie that's impossible to take seriously, but also far too dull to be any fun.

All of which begs the question: who is *Hitman: Agent 47* for? Action movie aficionados are unlikely to watch a more anaemic thriller this year, and a few visual nods aside, there's little here to endear fans of the *Hitman* games either. The videogame series has always prided itself on facilitating creative assassinations on high-profile targets in exotic locations across the globe – a simple but enduringly popular framework that has worked for over 15 years. *Agent 47* takes that basic premise and strips it of any identity, save for a red tie and a pair of handguns.

A good *Hitman* film should appeal to fans of the source material, engage thrill-seeking cineastes and, at the very least, satisfy theatregoers who want to sit in a dark room and be entertained. Unfortunately, on all of these counts, *Agent 47* fails irredeemably

Ross Hamilton

SciFiNow scored **2** for Hitman: Agent 47

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FEELING LIKE MURDER

We reflect on Agent 47's second film outing

Q: Rupert Friend or Timothy Olyphant?
A: Ouch. Do we have to pick? Let's go with Olyphant, as we like his name and he did a better job of capturing Agent 47's most important feature – his shiny, bald head.

Q: Where does this film rank in the videogame movie canon?
A: It's got some stiff competition, but we're comfortable placing *Hitman: Agent 47* somewhere near the bottom.

Q: Who would you like to see play 47 in a re-reboot?
A: No one? Honestly the best thing to come out of this film is that we likely won't have to see another *Hitman* movie.

Q: What's your favourite *Hitman* game?
A: Now you're talking. It's probably a toss-up between *Hitman 2: Silent Assassin*, or *Blood Money*. We like what we've seen of the upcoming sequel (simply titled *Hitman*) too. Now there's a reboot we can get behind!

OR STAY IN AND WATCH...



John Wick
Keanu Reeves demonstrates what a hit man movie should be about – carrying out a lot of hits.

TRIVIA THE LATE PAUL WALKER HAD BEEN ATTACHED TO PLAY AGENT 47 BEFORE HIS TRAGIC DEATH IN 2013, AFTER WHICH RUPERT FRIEND WAS APPROACHED.

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SYNCHRONICITY

Mayhem in time and space

Details TBC // 101 mins // TBC **Director** Jacob Gentry **Screenwriters** Jacob Gentry, Alex Orr **Cast** Chad McKnight, AJ Bowen, Brianne Davis, Scott Poytress, Michael Ironside **Distributor** TBC

Where most time-travel films fall apart once you start to factor in those pesky paradoxes, *Synchronicity* manages to not fall into that category due to a savvy spin on well-worn ground. Smart but not alienatingly so, the sci-fi noir (which world-premiered at Montreal's Fantasia International Film Festival) marks a welcome return to feature film-making for *The Signal* co-director Jacob Gentry.

Having invented a device that can fold time and space, daring physicist Jim Beale (Chad McKnight) and his team need to show it can actually work. Cue the mysterious appearance of a rare Dahlia from the future and the enigmatic Abby (Brianne Davis), who may or may not be trying to steal the device, along with ruthless capitalist Klaus Meisner (Michael Ironside). In order to prevent this from happening, Jim travels back in time but finds himself caught in a love triangle that could endanger his entire future.

With echoes of *Blade Runner* in style and *Memento* in puzzle piece structure, the biggest compliment you can pay *Synchronicity* is how fresh it feels. A large part of that is due to it being, at its heart, a love story, both between Jim and Abby and between Jim and scientific discovery. McKnight and Davis make for an engaging central pairing, ensuring that however complex the science, you're always involved in the film's outcome.

Crucially, Gentry and Alex Orr's ever-twisting script never throws in mystery for mystery's sake, even though the film packs in plenty of curveballs. Seasoned sci-fi fans may often think they know where it's going, but the script has other ideas and, in AJ Bowen (*The Signal*)'s Chuck, provides an audience surrogate as things get weird to keep it getting too convoluted.

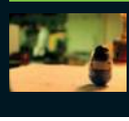
There's no doubt full attention is required, yet patience is rewarded as the film starts to reveal its full hand and comes together in pleasing fashion, albeit with a dash of ambiguity. A repeat viewing is likely required, but you'll be more than happy to revisit the retro-futuristic analogue world of *Synchronicity*.

Ian Sandwell



8 SciFiNow scored **8** for Synchronicity
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

OR STAY IN AND WATCH...



Primer
Shane Carruth's mind-bending sci-fi also follows people messing with things they don't understand.



THE VISIT

We Don't Care About the Old folks

Details 15 // 94 mins // Out now **Director** M Night Shyamalan **Screenwriter** M Night Shyamalan **Cast** Kathryn Hahn, Olivia DeJonge, Ed Oxenbould **Distributor** Universal



When you sit down to watch an M Night Shyamalan film, it comes with the expectation of a twist. You may spend most of your viewing time trying to work out exactly where Shyamalan is headed and what the twist will be. So it comes as no surprise that there's one in this entertainingly bad comedy horror, which sees two teenagers leave the comfort of their city home and the warm arms of their loving single mother (Kathryn Hahn) to visit their estranged grandparents, who live on a remote farm. However, you may sit in perplexed shock at how cringe-inducing and awful it is.

Rebecca (Olivia DeJonge) is an aspiring filmmaker who is interested in finding out why her mother hasn't spoken to her parents in 15 years. So she arranges a trip to visit her grandparents, along with her younger brother Tyler (Ed Oxenbould), and begins a documentary project about her family. When their grandparents start acting odd during their week-long visit, with 'Pops' advising them to never leave their room after 9.30pm, they start to investigate exactly why.

Shyamalan's script throws up ethical questions about documentary filmmaking, but basically he's just having a bit of a nag about the manipulation of subjects. And both of the kids spew dialogue that aspires to be full of the irony, energy and humour of Kevin Williamson's back catalogue of screenplays, but fails miserably. He also paints the age gap in broad strokes, with the tech-savvy Rebecca and rap-obsessed Tyler defining the youth of today. Granny suffers from dementia, and Pops is often confused and angry, which leaves the kids shaken, but then any good work on this topic is undone and made a mockery of, especially in the final throes.

The mystery surrounding their mother's estrangement is used as a device to keep you hooked while all the rest of the crap is flying around in the background, but even that ends up drawing a disappointingly tame conclusion. *The Visit* is crass and predictable, and nearly as bad as the extremely dire *The Happening*.

Katherine McLaughlin



2 SciFiNow scored **2** for The Visit
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

OR STAY IN AND WATCH...



Homebodies
A group of pensioners take a violent stand against gentrification in Larry Yust's comedy horror.

TRIVIA *SYNCHRONICITY*'S WORMHOLE SEQUENCES WERE CREATED USING STOP-MOTION AND TIME-LAPSE MACRO PHOTOGRAPHY OF ACTUAL LIQUIDS BY DESIGNER KIM PIMMEL.



SINISTER 2 Baguul who walks behind the rows

Details 15 // 97 mins // Out now **Director** Ciarán Foy **Screenwriters** Scott Derrickson, C Robert Cargill **Cast** James Ransone, Shannyn Sossamon, Robert Daniel Sloan, Dartanian Sloan **Distributor** Entertainment One



The first Sinister was a high point for Blumhouse; a well-acted, tense and genuinely creepy chiller that also made a ton of money for the studio. Director Scott Derrickson steps back from the camera for the sequel (taking co-writing duties with C Robert Cargill), which tries a different approach with mixed results.

Courtney Collins (Shannyn Sossamon) and her twin boys Dylan (Robert Daniel Sloan) and Zach (Dartanian Sloan) have moved to a remote farmhouse to escape her abusive husband. Unfortunately, it has been marked by the bogeyman, and the spirits of the evil kids are intent on pushing Dylan to murder by forcing him to watch their kill films. Can Ex-Deputy So-And-So (James Ransone) figure out how to help before it's too late?

Sensibly deciding to focus on the kids rather than putting another hapless investigator through original star Ethan Hawke's journey, director Ciarán Foy (*Citadel*) quickly establishes an air of creepiness. The early scenes of a young boy being forced to watch shocking scenes of 'real' violence are disturbing, and the kill films are still effective.

Similarly successful is the return of Ransone's character, who is moved into the leading man role while retaining his endearing Deputy-Dewey-from-*Scream* earnestness. He's a refreshing genre lead thanks to his awareness of exactly how bad the situation is, and he has good chemistry with Sossamon, who also puts in strong work.

However, things get dicey in the second half with a twist that's both telegraphed and underwritten. The script adds extra layers to the Baguul mythos, but the abusive-father storyline feels rushed. As for those creepy ghost kids, less is more, and their presence gets less scary with each reappearance and scornful smirk.

This may not be as scary or cohesive as its predecessor, but the kill films retain their power to shock and Ransone and Sossamon make for a very watchable lead pairing. It rattles and shakes, but there are still scares to be had on this ghost train.

Jonathan Hatfull



6 SciFiNow scored **6** for Sinister 2

Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

OR STAY IN AND WATCH...



Dark Water
Hideo Nakata's brilliant horror blends moving domestic drama with terrifying scares.



THE MESSENGER Not enough to raise the spirits

Details 15 // 101 mins // Out now **Director** David Blair **Screenwriter** Andrew Kirk **Cast** Robert Sheehan, Lily Cole, Tamzin Merchant, David O'Hara, Alex Wyndham, Joely Richardson **Distributor** Metrodome



What would the dead tell us, if they could speak? And just how badly would those words mess up the one delivering the message? Homegrown thriller *The Messenger* poses these questions, but regrettably misses the mark in a script that never quite lands the emotional punch it aspires to.

Jack (Robert Sheehan) can see dead people. Ghosts come to him with their unfinished business, hoping for closure, but he wants none of it. This ability is a burden he's carried since childhood. To the rest of the world he's the oddball at the back of the pub talking to himself, or the uninvited guest at their loved one's funeral spouting final goodbyes.

Caught between the living and the dead, he numbs himself with pills and booze, wearing his misanthropy like armour.

Murdered journalist Mark (Jack Fox) turns to Jack to get in touch with his widow (Tamzin Merchant). But it's hardly easy telling a grieving stranger that her dead husband says hi, particularly with no-nonsense DCI Keane (David O'Hara) on the hunt for the killer. The detective is understandably suspicious of Jack's motives, thinking at best he's crazy and at worst he could be responsible for Mark's death.

Jack's sister (Lily Cole) re-enters his life, hoping to reconnect, but struggles to identify with him, and the audience is left to guess whether these voices are real or in his head.

The Messenger pitches itself as a paranormal horror, but it's more melodramatic than unnerving. It sits awkwardly between supernatural and psychological thriller, never quite committing to either.

Emotional flashbacks to Jack's troubled childhood are interwoven, but aren't enough to save it from a plodding first half and lack of focus. Sheehan brings a lot of sarcastic rage to Jack, but it's hard to find the will to care for him. Scenes of the character storming through the countryside, talking over his shoulder, look striking and are probably supposed to add pathos. Instead, they come across as hollow attempts at profundity.

The Messenger feels listless. It never quite gets off the ground, and the characters come across as two-dimensional tropes rather than people worth investing in. It's a shame, because there's an interesting premise underneath it all.

Krystal Sim

5 SciFiNow scored **5** for The Messenger

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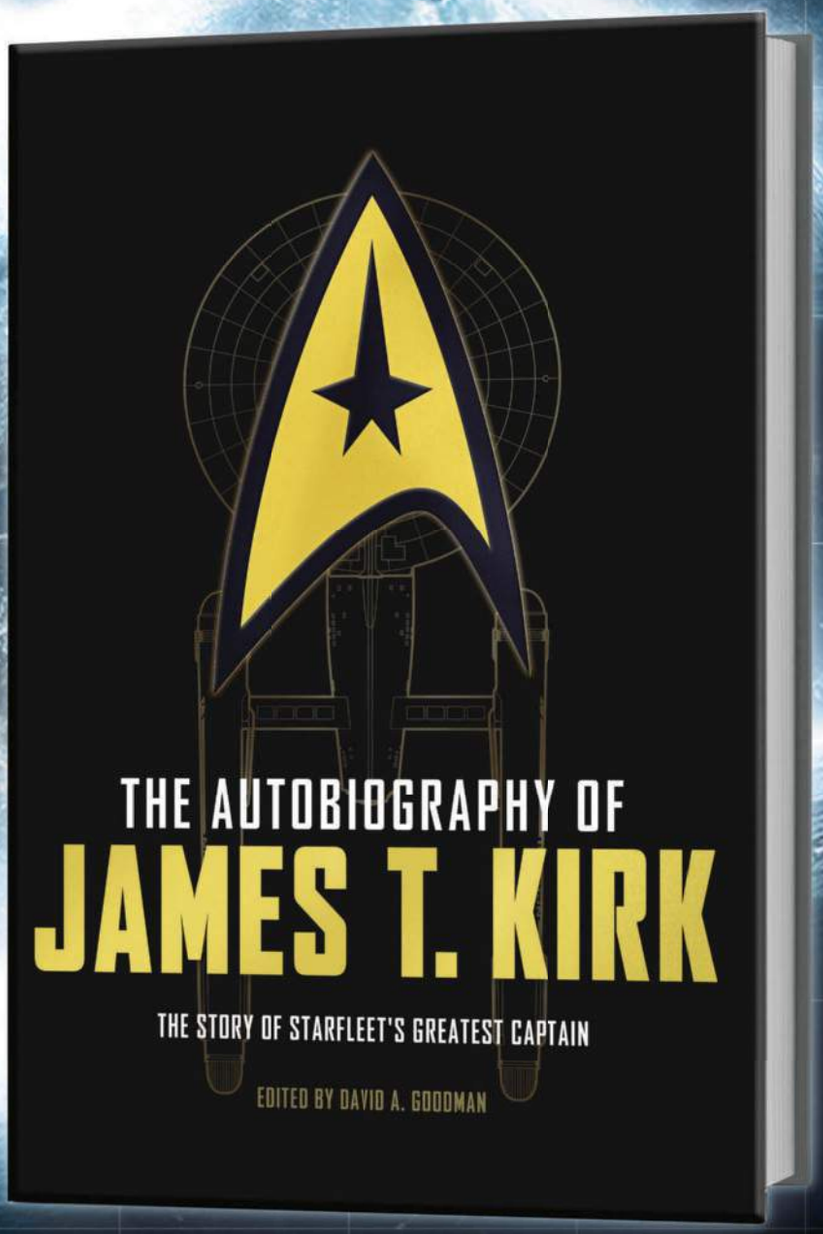
OR STAY IN AND WATCH...



The Haunting (1963)
A classic horror film that balances supernatural chills with psychological terror beautifully.

TRIVIA JAMES RANSONE'S DEPUTY SO-AND-SO REMAINS NAMELESS IN HOMAGE TO SERGIO LEONE'S THE MAN WITH NO NAME.

FROM CADET TO CAPTAIN, MY LIFE IN THE STARS



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FILM4 FRIGHTFEST 2015

Hordes of horror fans descended once again on Leicester Square for five days of blood, guts, ghouls and gore. From devil babies and witches to gnome stick-wielding badasses, here's everything we saw at Film4 FrightFest 2015!

FEST INFO

When
27-31 August
Where
Vue Cinema,
Leicester Square

TICKETS

Details
Festival pass £185
Friday & Saturday pass £60
Thursday £30
Monday £50.
Individual tickets £13.25
Website
www.frightfest.co.uk

FILMS

Nina Forever // We Are Still Here // Turbo Kid // Tales Of Halloween // Hellions // They Look Like People // Sun Choke // Pod // Shut In // Night Of The Living Deb // Hangman // Slumlord // Emelie // The Diabolical // The Shelter // Demonic // Over Your Dead Body // Wind Walkers // Some Kind Of Hate // Final Girl // Suspension // Most Likely To Die // Inner Demon // Last Girl Standing // Road Games // The Rotten Link // Rabid Dogs // Awaiting // Estranged // Never Let Go // Landmine Goes Click // Bait // Night Fare // Scherzo Diabolico // Stung // Zombie Fight Club // Frankenstein // The Hallow // Deathgasm // Cherry Tree // Banjo // Curtain // Jeruzalem // AAAAAAAAH!

BEST OF THE FEST

Best in show goes to The Blaine Brothers' sweet, sharp, sad and sexy *Nina Forever*, which found a new and brilliant approach to the undead girlfriend story, as paramedic student Holly (Abigail Hardingham) is forced to contend with her boyfriend's dead ex (Fiona O'Shaughnessy). The Blaines embrace the Clive Barker-esque eroticism of the situation in all its slippery complications, and show real confidence. It's bittersweet, heartfelt, heart-breaking, thoughtful, hilarious, audacious and absolutely fantastic. We loved it.

Ted Geoghegan's *We Are Still Here* was a wonderfully entertaining and deeply creepy tribute to Lucio Fulci, in which grieving parents move into a house that already has spectral occupants. It's a gory love-letter with a big heart and excellent performances. The same can be said of *Turbo Kid*, a crowd-pleasing tribute to post-*Mad Max* low-budget apocalypse movies of the Eighties in which our two BMX-riding heroes face up to Michael Ironside's water-hogging villain. It's very funny, very sweet and very gory.

Anthology horror *Tales Of Halloween* was a similarly affectionate love-letter; bloody, hilarious and spooky, but addressed to a season rather than a genre. It's unabashedly gleeful in tone, mostly going for laughs rather than chills, and the obvious fun the filmmakers (including Axelle Carolyn, Neil Marshall and Lucky McKee) had making it translates to the viewer.

Pontypool director Bruce McDonald delivered a vivid nightmare-logic Halloween fable with *Hellions*, in which a pregnant teen is under siege from terrifying trick-or-treaters who want her baby. This creepy and atmospheric film creates a beautiful and unpredictable world in which reality is slippery and danger is everywhere.

More psychological thrills could be found in Perry Blackshear's intense and moving mental-illness drama *They Look Like People*, in which two friends must deal with the fact that one believes the end is coming. It's thrilling and terrifying, but sensitive and intelligent.

Ben Cresciman's *Sun Choke* was a gripping, daring arthouse horror with a stunning central performance from Sarah Hagan as Janie, who's just trying to get well. With a bold structure and hypnotic cinematography, this is excellent, and you will want to watch it again.

Mickey Keating's *Pod* found a new and gripping spin on the cabin in the woods formula, as two siblings head up to the old family cabin to retrieve their unstable brother before realising that he might be on to something. With three very strong lead performances and some excellent twists, this is an intense chiller.

Our favourite home invasion took place in *Shut In*, which pitched the excellent Beth Riesgraf's grieving agoraphobe against three crooks and delivered nasty surprises, dark chuckles and a hugely entertaining horror.

JUST A SCORE

NINA FOREVER 9 | TURBO KID 8 | **HELLIONS** 8 | THEY LOOK LIKE PEOPLE 9 | **SHUT IN** 7 | POD 8
WE ARE STILL HERE 8 | **TALES OF HALLOWEEN** 7 | SUN CHOKE 9 | **NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEB** 7 | EMILIE 6

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Queen of FrightFest Barbara Crampton in *We Are Still Here*.



***Turbo Kid* was an amazing blast of awesome nostalgia.**



Seasonal chills were the order of the day in hugely fun anthology *Tales Of Halloween*.



Bruce McDonald's *Hellions* was absolutely gorgeous.

YOUR THOUGHTS

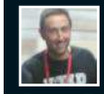
We asked you @SciFiNow what your favourite moments were



"We Are Still Here probably the best film I saw, but Turbo Kid the most enjoyable." – **@xBombenhagelx**



"A Christmas Horror Story. Made a @Film4FrightFest jump – twice." **@Adrianwake**



"#ShutIn-Movie probably my favourite" **@mungflesh**



"Turbo Kid! Absolutely nuts 80s VHS homage that was actually well made!" **@ZombieSchoolUK**



"The Hallow and We Are Still Here. Both imaginative, interesting and beautiful." **@OrtonCait**



"Turbo Kid was a blast. High octane gore with an 80's feel." **@jasonprkr**

Finally, we want to give a shout out to Kyle Rankin's *Night Of The Living Deb*, a sweet and warm-hearted comedy that proves there's still life in the rom-zom-com yet, as the awesome Maria Thayer lurches from a one-night-stand into the zombie apocalypse. There's a welcome reversal of the stereotypical comedy gender dynamics, some great laughs, and Ray Wise in a dressing gown.

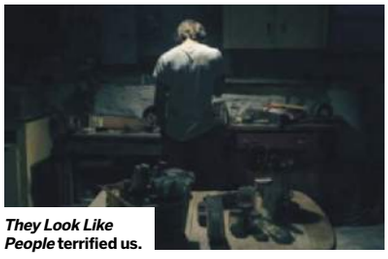
THE HORRORS CONTINUED...

Your own home proved to be as unsafe as ever, as both *Hangman* and *Slumlord* filled houses with hidden cameras. The former was a more involving and creepy chiller, while the latter suffered from irritating characters and a sleazier tone.

You should also check your babysitter's references, as shown in the genuinely unpredictable *Emelie*, in which Sarah Bolger excels as a babysitter who may not have the kids' best interests in mind, but the film can't quite stick the landing.

Evil spirits were sometimes housebound, often not. Ali Larter tangled with a recurring apparition in the inventive but oddly dull haunter *The Diabolical*, while Michael Pare was tormented in John Fallon's atmospheric and often moving debut *The Shelter*. *Room 237*'s Rodney Ascher explored the horror of sleep paralysis in his documentary *The Nightmare*, which was inconsistent, but did offer some fantastic jump scares.

James Wan's name above Will Cannon's *Demonic* was no guarantee of quality, apparently, as a strong cast (Maria Bello, Frank Grillo) lent credibility to a clunky spectral whodunit that wasn't saved by an overdone twist. Out of the house, and Takashi Miike tormented a theatre company in the elegant, haunting *Over Your Dead Body* to good effect, marking a welcome win for the prolific director, and Russell Friedenberg's *Wind Walkers* combined Native American mythology with shell-shocked American veterans (and a bit of *Predator*) for an ambitious and entertaining genre blend. Our favourite spectre was to be found in *Some Kind Of Hate*, an energetic if divisive slasher, in which a bullied teen at an isolated reform school conjures the spirit of ferociously vengeful Moira. Like a heavy metal *Point Horror*, there's a sincerity to its rage-filled teens that gives it a real impact. ⇒



***They Look Like People* terrified us.**



Sarah Hagan in the great *Sun Choke*.



Beth Riesgraf was fantastic in nifty home-invasion horror *Shut In*.

HANGMAN 6 SLUMLORD 4 **OVER YOUR DEAD BODY** 7 WIND WALKERS 6 **SOME KIND OF HATE** 7 DEMONIC 4 **ESTRANGED** 5
THE NIGHTMARE 6 **THE DIABOLICAL** 3 THE SHELTER 6 **RABID DOGS** 6 THE ROTTEN LINK 7 **FINAL GIRL** 5 LAST GIRL STANDING 7

TRIVIA *TURBO KID* WAS ORIGINALLY SUBMITTED FOR INCLUSION IN HORROR ANTHOLOGY *THE ABCS OF DEATH*, BUT THE PRODUCERS TOLD THEM TO TURN IT INTO A FEATURE.

Elsewhere, conventional slashers were in relatively short supply. Abigail Breslin turned the tables on her tormentors in Tyler Shields' stylish if disappointingly shallow *Final Girl*. Canadian indie *Suspension* pitted its teen outcast against a dark figure from her past, but shattered its atmosphere whenever it went for laughs.

Anthony DiBlasi's *Most Likely To Die* saw a pre-high school reunion party go wrong when someone showed up with a murderous agenda, but it's inconsistent and only occasionally fun.

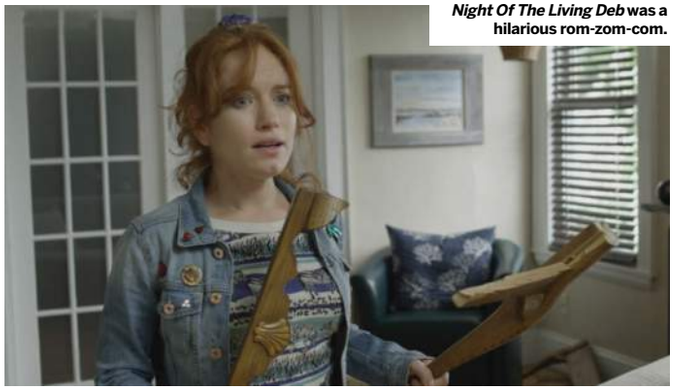
Australian horror *Inner Demon* offered an intriguing premise with its incredibly tight focus, as a teenage kidnap victim heroine is locked in a cupboard bleeding to death for most of the film, but there's just not enough substance to support its high concept.

We were big fans of Benjamin Moody's post-slasher horror *Last Girl Standing*, which followed a survivor of a bloody massacre as she attempts to reintegrate into society. It's a bleak character study for the most part and, although it goes over the top in its final act, this was a powerful and well-acted chiller that marks its writer-director out as a real talent.

Excellent acting was in strong supply in Abnel Pastor's *Road Games* (no relation to the Ozploitation movie), in which a young Irish hitchhiker in France and his beautiful new friend spend the night with an eccentric couple (Frederic Pierrot and Barbara Crampton). It's unpredictable, tense and very well performed.

Argentinean drama *The Rotten Link* also impressed, as a family at the bottom of their village's feeding chain encounter the events that will bring everything crashing down. It's atmospheric, bleak and wryly funny, and we highly recommend it. French Bava remake *Rabid Dogs* boasted a very strong cast and an incredible sense of style (all neon reds and pounding synths), but was oddly uninvolving as three criminals make for the Swiss border with hostages in tow.

Tony Curran was the best thing about predictable but full-blooded British chiller *Awaiting*, playing a mechanic living in the woods with his teenage daughter who makes life hell for the rich city guy who breaks down on his patch. Adam Levins' *Estranged* starts very well with an amnesiac being brought back to her family's country pile after a bike accident, but suffers once it



Night Of The Living Deb **was a hilarious rom-zom-com.**



An excellent French cast get tense in the *Rabid Dogs* remake.



Corin Hardy's *The Hallow* sold out.



James Wan's *Demonic* stumbled



Hangman **got inside your house.**



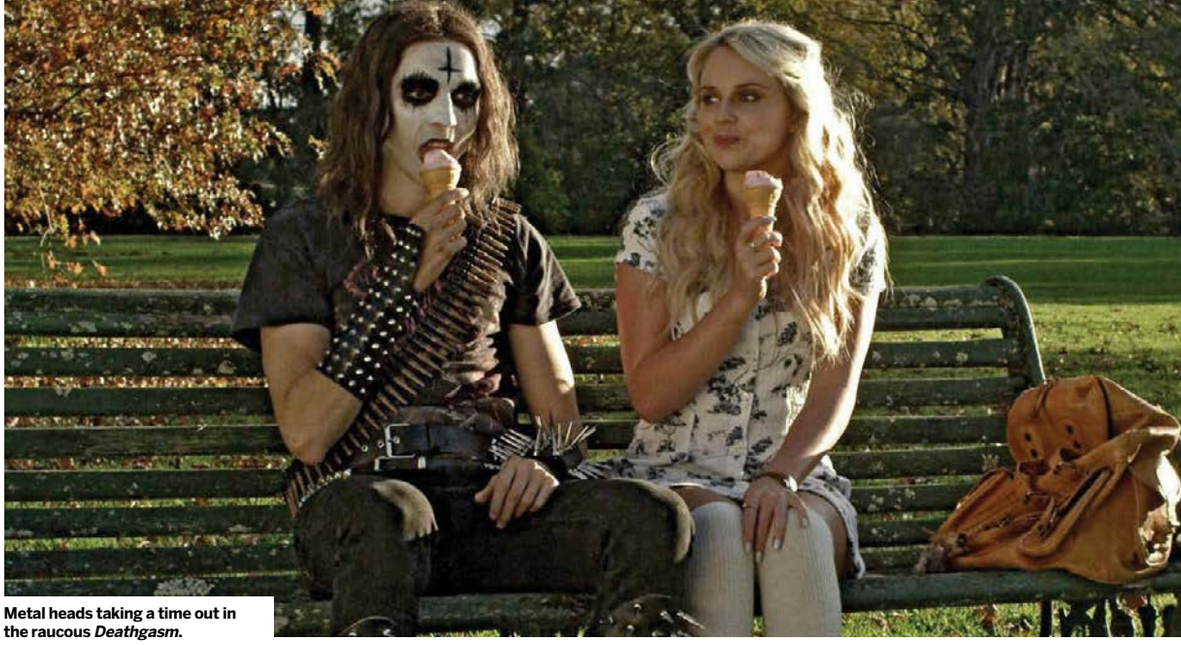
Last Girl Standing **showed life after the slasher movie finale.**

JUST A SCORE

MOST LIKELY TO DIE 4 | INNER DEMON 4 | **SUSPENSION** 4 | AWAITING 4 | **LANDMINE GOES CLICK** 4
ESTRANGED 5 | **BAIT** 6 | NEVER LET GO 4 | **BODY** 6 | SCHERZO DIABOLICO 7 | **ZOMBIE FIGHT CLUB** 3



There's something in the cellar in *Pod*.



Metal heads taking a time out in the raucous *Deathgasm*.



Giant wasps attack in *Stung*.



Toyah Wilcox in one of the *AAAAAAAAH!* stills we can print.



Holy land horrors in *Jeruzalem*.

reveals its twist and revels a little too much in its grubbiness.

Howard J Ford's kidnap drama *Never Let Go* boasts a compelling performance from Angela Dixon as the woman hunting down the bastards who took her baby in Morocco, but some incredibly daft subplots undermine the attempts at *Taken*-style grit and opening credit crawl sincerity.

Divisive Georgian-set chiller *Landmine Goes Click* also aimed for grit, standing its male lead on a landmine while a local hunter threatens his friend. There might be something beneath the superficial unpleasantness if you really dig for it, but frankly we were unconvinced by its sub-Haneke grimness. Dominic Brunt's brutal thriller *Bait*, in which two women are stalked and brutalised by a loan shark, feels more timely and affecting, even if it can't help leaning too far into its genre trappings.

Body works in a familiar space as three girls who broke into a mansion have to deal with the titular prone problem, but it's well handled and the performances are good. Julien Seri's stylish *Night Fare* was met with a rapturous reception, starting as a blend of Carpenter-esque slasher and *The Car* before taking a batshit left turn with a bizarre and potentially divisive (and problematic) ending. Adrián García Bogliano made a welcome return to the festival with his seedy thriller *Scherzo Diabolico*, in which a put-upon office worker begins a meticulously planned journey to success. It's a clever, unpleasant little thriller, which seems to relish its antihero's journey, but takes more pleasure in tearing him apart.

It wouldn't be FrightFest without some monsters, and *Stung* featured furious giant wasps attacking a dinner party. It's not as fun as its inspirations and falls apart towards the end, but the creatures look great. Zombies took over an apartment block in the muddled and mostly tasteless *Zombie Fight Club*, while *Bite* was truly revolting (in a good way), as a woman returning from her bachelorette paty in Costa Rica begins to transform into something... different, dripping with goo and laying eggs everywhere. On the artier side, Bernard Rose's *Frankenstein* was an ingenious update that managed to be faithful to the text and make the most of modern technology. There are some final-act problems, but it's genuinely affecting, and Xavier Samuel is superb in the title role. Corin Hardy's Studio Ghibli-influenced Sundance favourite *The Hallow* sold out the discovery screen, and we thoroughly enjoyed this creepy, well-acted and hugely atmospheric story of a family who fall foul of the creatures living in the Irish woods marked for destruction.

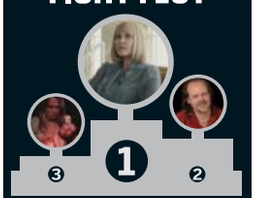
And there was madness to be found. New Zealand horror comedy *Deathgasm* was frequently hilarious and definitely endearing, as its outcast metalhead hero brings hell to his small town after a particularly bad day. There's gore and sex toys everywhere, and if you found the title funny, you'll have a great time with the film.

Opening night film *Cherry Tree* was a berserk blend of tones that didn't gel thanks to a clunky script, as a 15-year-old schoolgirl agrees to get pregnant if her hockey coach/local witch agrees to save her dad, and ends up having to take on a coven. Liam Regan's *Banjo* was a Troma tribute about a put-upon young man turning to his imaginary friend that sent bodily fluids flying and anyone who doesn't love schlock running to the exit, while Jaron Henrie-McCrea's *Curtain* was an inventive and insane indie about a woman who finds a portal in her bathroom wall. It might have been better served as a short, but it was ambitious and great fun. There was nuttiness to *Jeruzalem* too, which starts as an Americans abroad horror but ends up as a combination of *[REC]* and *Cloverfield*, and it's a highly entertaining blend.

The prize for maddest film goes to Steve Oram's *AAAAAAAAH!*, which is cinematic Marmite, a violent, dialogue-free dark comedy in which everyone behaves like apes. Toyah Wilcox shits on the floor, Oram pisses on a fridge and Julian Barratt fondles a Battenberg. You'll love it or hate it, but you won't have seen anything like it.

"STEVE ORAM'S AAAAAAAA! IS CINEMATIC MARMITE"

MOST SEEN AT FIGHT FEST



1. Barbara Crampton
4 films (*We Are Still Here, Sun Choke, Road Games, Tales Of Halloween*)

2. Larry Fessenden
3 films (*We Are Still Here, Pod, Body*)

3. Devil baby
2 films (*Hellions, Cherry Tree*)

NIGHT FARE 7 **CURTAIN** 6 STUNG 5 **BITE** 6 FRANKENSTEIN 7 **THE HALLOW** 7
JERUZALEM 7 **AAAAAAAA!** 7 CHERRY TREE 3 **DEATHGASM** 7 BANJO 3 **ROAD GAMES** 7

TRIVIA *DEATHGASM* DIRECTOR JASON LEI HOWDEN PERFORMS BACKING VOCALS ON SOME OF THE MOVIE'S SONGS.

COOTIES

The kids aren't alright

Details 15 // 96 mins // 2015 // Blu-ray • DVD // **Released** 12 October **Directors** Jonathan Milott, Cary Murnion **Cast** Elijah Wood, Alison Pill, Rainn Wilson, Jorge Garcia, Leigh Whannell **Distributor** Universal Pictures UK



Children are often a protected species in horror, so the central concept of *Cooties* – teachers fight back against their infected pupils – is an enticing one. It's a shame, then, that it takes so long for the film to throw its taboo-busting punches, meaning most will already be waiting for the school bell.

On his first day back at his former school as a substitute teacher, struggling writer Clint (Elijah Wood) finds that his timing couldn't be any worse. His childhood crush Lucy (Alison Pill) has shacked up with angry gym teacher Wade (Rainn Wilson), and a tainted chicken nugget has found its way into the school's cafeteria, leading to all pre-pubescent students becoming a bit bitey. The teachers soon find themselves trapped, and it's up to Clint to band everyone together to make sure they survive the outbreak.

It's notoriously tricky for a horror-comedy to succeed on both fronts, but the biggest issue for *Cooties* is that it fails to do either aspect particularly well. There's no accumulated tension, as you never feel the teachers are in danger, despite being outnumbered, and the film's attempts at humour are often lazy and broad – co-writer Leigh Whannell in particular is lumbered with a painful comic relief character as a nerdy science teacher.

Unfortunately, this laziness extends to what should have been the film's saving grace: killing the children. One delicious pay-off aside involving a car ornament, there is little invention in its gore, with the children often dispatched briefly and repetitively; when you've seen one baseball strike to the head, you've seen them all. Perhaps as a result of budgetary constraints (the film's ending was reshot when Lionsgate backed the film with extra finance), most of the climactic sequences are also dimly lit and rapidly shot, which compounds the issue.

There are flashes of inspiration where the film briefly comes to life that give you a sense of what might have been, yet however infectious the concept is, it turns out that *Cooties* isn't that hard to shake off.

Ian Sandwell







SciFiNow scored **5** for Cooties

Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



The Faculty

A straighter school-based horror that flips the situation and has teachers turn on their pupils.

INSIDIOUS: CHAPTER 3

Break on through

Details 15 // 97 mins // 2015 // DVD • Blu-ray // **Released** 12 October **Director** Leigh Whannell **Cast** Lin Shaye, Stefanie Scott, Dermot Mulroney, Angus Sampson **Distributor** Entertainmet One



After the muddled, berserk *Insidious: Chapter 2*, writer Leigh Whannell eases back on the throttle with his directorial debut. The third movie in the Blumhouse franchise is a prequel, showing us how Lin Shaye's psychic/demon hunter Elise Rainier gets back in the game after losing her husband and being stalked by an evil force. Teen Quinn Brenner (Stefanie Scott) is the target of evil spirits this time, and her dad (Dermot Mulroney) is helpless.

Displaying confidence in his first time behind the camera, Whannell delivers a solidly spooky follow-up that benefits from the increased focus on Elise. Shaye is excellent, and there's something wonderful about her becoming the franchise lead. There are some genuine chills as she ventures into The Further, some strong shocks closer to home, and the performances are good across the board.

The structure is familiar and the diminishing returns concerns are real, but there's a lot to like here.

Jonathan Hatfull

SciFiNow scored **6** for Insidious: Chapter 3

Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE



THE CANAL

In the mouth of madness

SciFiNow Must see now!

Details 15 // 92 mins // 2014 // DVD // **Released** Out now **Director** Ivan Kavanagh **Cast** Rupert Evans, Antonia Campbell-Hughes, Hannah Hoekstra, Steve Oram **Distributor** Kaleidoscope Home Entertainment



Gripping psychological chiller *The Canal* was one of the most talked about horrors at last year's FrightFest, and with good reason.

Rupert Evans (*Hellboy*) plays David, a film archivist who believes that his wife is cheating on him. When he's given a reel from 1902 by his assistant (Antonia Campbell-Hughes), he sees that a brutal murder was committed in the house he and his family live in. David becomes unstable and quickly loses his grip when a body shows up. Is there really something in the canal?

Writer-director Ivan Kavanagh establishes an atmosphere of unease, and Evans excels as a man losing his grip on reality, without going full Jack Torrance. It's not without its shocks, but there's a wonderful, horrible sense of dread about *The Canal* that makes it stay with you long after it's finished. Reminiscent of *Candyman* in its grimy urban legend paranoia, Kavanagh has created an undeniably powerful horror.

Jonathan Hatfull

SciFiNow scored **8** for The Canal

Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE



TRIVIA *COOTIES* IS THE LATEST FEATURE FROM ELIJAH WOOD'S SPECTREVISION, THE COMPANY BEHIND *A GIRL WALKS HOME ALONE AT NIGHT* AND *OPEN WINDOWS*.

JUST A SCORE
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GIVE YOUR SCORES • FOLLOW OUR SCORES

AVENGERS: AGE OF ULTRON

SciFiNow Must see now!

Robot Wars

Details 12 // 141 mins // 2015 // Blu-ray • DVD • iTunes // **Released** Out now **Director** Joss Whedon **Cast** Robert Downey Jr, Chris Evans, Chris Hemsworth, Scarlett Johansson, Mark Ruffalo, James Spader **Distributor** Walt Disney Studios Home Entertainment



Well, it's safe to say that the follow-up to *Avengers Assemble* didn't disappoint. After a few years of solo sequels ranging from the excellent (*Captain America: The Winter Soldier*) to the polarising (*Thor: The Dark World*), *Age Of Ultron* reminded us why the first team-up was such a mammoth success story.

Seeing the Avengers forced to deal with the consequences after Tony Stark (Robert Downey Jr) and Bruce Banner (Mark Ruffalo) accidentally breathe life into AI-turned-homicidal Ultron (James Spader), this is Marvel at its most purely fun. From a Mjolnir lifting contest to some choice Stark-isms (notably the "hide the zucchini" line, directed at Natasha and Bruce), this is a story that remembers what it was that made it work, and adds more of the same.

The new storytelling elements are a mixed bag. Ultron is one of the MCU's better villains to date (which isn't saying much when, with the exception of Loki, the MCU's adversaries haven't exactly been the best), while Scarlet Witch (Elizabeth Olsen) and Quicksilver (Aaron Taylor-Johnson) make an impression despite their relatively limited screen time. Moreover, Hawkeye (Jeremy Renner) gets more of a storyline this time round, and Banner and Natasha (Scarlett Johansson) benefit from having their characters fleshed out, despite elements of the latter's narrative appearing to have been slightly misjudged.

Even so, this isn't perfect. Despite some wrought moments, the finale inevitably descends into a maelstrom of laser-fire and punches, and certain elements seem to have been affected by cuts to the run time, like Thor (Chris Hemsworth)'s bizarre cave-based premonition, and Nick Fury (Samuel L Jackson) randomly appearing from behind a tractor to deliver exposition. How long had he been behind there?

With *Infinity War* and more on the way, *Age Of Ultron* works both a changing-of-the-guard of sorts and as an excellent sequel in its own right.

Steve Wright



SciFiNow scored **9** for Avengers: Age Of Ultron
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



Mystery Men
Often overlooked, you should definitely make room in your life for this superhero spoof.

TOMORROWLAND

Small world: make the most of it

Details 12 // 130 mins // 2015 // Blu-ray • DVD // **Released** 5 October **Director** Brad Bird **Cast** Britt Robertson, George Clooney, Hugh Laurie **Distributor** Walt Disney Studios Home Entertainment



Despite initially coming across as a puff piece for everything Disney-related (complete with a plot point featuring a secret passage in the 'It's A Small World' ride), *Tomorrowland: A World Beyond* proves to be a surprisingly thoughtful and (mostly) un Disney-like meditation on our likely future.

It's a story of the new reinvigorating the old, with tech-savvy teen Casey (Britt Robertson)'s optimism contrasting against the disillusioned Frank (George Clooney), and of regret at wasted opportunities turning into a dash to make up for lost time. The script itself could be leaner – you get the impression that it's about 20 minutes too long – but Clooney and Robertson are great leads, which helps pad things out no end.



Visually, it's excellent too. Melding World's Fair-era classicism with an *Interstellar*-esque portrait of a rusting world that has long since given up, it certainly stands apart from your average blockbuster. The overwhelming message is one of hope and self-improvement, and we can definitely get behind that. It's a noted improvement on some previous futuristic titles.

Steve Wright

SciFiNow scored **7** for Tomorrowland
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE



JURASSIC WORLD A comedy of terror-dactyls

Details 12 // 124 mins // 2015 // Blu-ray · DVD · iTunes // **Released** 19 October
Director Colin Trevorrow **Cast** Chris Pratt, Bryce Dallas Howard, Nick Robinson, Ty Simpkins **Distributor** Universal Pictures UK



Among all the other Eighties film reboots like *Star Wars*, *Ghostbusters* and *Mad Max* that are popping up all over the place is the fourth outing in the dino-tastic *Jurassic Park* series, *Jurassic World*.

The cast is terrific. Bryce Dallas Howard shines as Claire, the park's uptight but amusing operations manager. Chris Pratt is suitably cool and outdoorsy as velociraptor trainer Owen, Irrfan Khan is fun as park owner Simon Masrani, and even Jake Johnson and Lauren Lapkus as a pair of control-room techies have enough to work with to make their characters not only worthwhile, but likeable. But even with a stellar cast, the film still seems to be lacking something.

Jurassic World doesn't have whatever it was that made the first film so timeless, and that would be fine under other circumstances. However, when you've been waiting 14 years since the third mediocre instalment, 'fine' becomes a bit disappointing. It's full of dinosaur hijinks though, and that's just fine.
Poppy-Jay Palmer

SciFiNow scored **7** for Jurassic World
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE



MAD MAX: FURY ROAD Rad Max

Details 15 // 120 mins // 2015 // Blu-ray · DVD · iTunes // **Released** 5 October
Director George Miller **Cast** Tom Hardy, Charlize Theron, Nicholas Hoult, Hugh Keays-Byrne **Distributor** Warner Home Video



After a 30-year hiatus, Max Rockatansky (Tom Hardy) is back and raring to go in the fourth *Mad Max* instalment from visionary director George Miller. After being held prisoner in a twisted utopia ruled by the dastardly Immortan Joe (Hugh Keays-Byrne), Max makes his escape and hitches a ride on a modified oil tanker. The driver, Imperator Furiosa (Charlize Theron), also happens to be escaping, smuggling with her five of Joe's 'wives', who want a shot at a new life.

It's impossible not to have a good time with *Fury Road*. Whatever your reasons for watching – a love of *Mad Max*, a love of action films or a love of angering men's rights activists – you'll come out of it feeling like you could go for another five or six rounds. It's got everything: mad car chases, impeccable visual effects, one of the best female roles ever written for an action film.

Though its budget was upwards of $150 million, Miller ensures it packs the same spirit as the breathtaking Ozploitation films of the Eighties, and then some.
Poppy-Jay Palmer

SciFiNow Must see now!



SciFiNow scored **9** for Mad Max: Fury Road
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

THE MAN WHO COULD CHEAT DEATH Hammer time

Details 15 // 83 mins // 1959 // Blu-ray // **Released** Out now **Director** Terence Fisher
Cast Anton Diffring, Hazel Court, Christopher Lee **Distributor** Eureka



The Terence Fisher-directed *The Man Who Could Cheat Death* is something of an oddity in the Hammer canon. Having split up the Cushing/Lee dream team after the former unexpectedly turned the role down, the latter was marginalised in favour of the lesser-talented Anton Diffring, with the result being a film that while possessing some striking moments, is far from the best among Hammer's output.

The plot concerns the seemingly immortal Dr Georges Bonnet (Diffring) seducing and subsequently murdering various women in order to stay young. With his mounting years starting to take their toll, however, he seeks the help of Doctor Pierre Gerard (Lee), all the while courting the attentions of Janie Dubois (Hazel Court).

Despite his power and the potential for terror that this offers (one of the most effective moments is an early scene in which Bonnet claims his first on-screen victim, brutally murdering her via a handy face-grab), *The Man Who Could Cheat Death* proves to be a surprisingly sedate offering. This is much more intrigue-orientated, with Bonnet eschewing his power in favour of blackmailing Gerard into helping him. Originating from a Barre Lyndon play (which had already been adapted into *The Man In Half Moon Street* in 1945), its origins on the stage couldn't be more obvious, and aren't always a good fit.

The performances are a mixed bag too. Lee is game as always, but is sidetracked for large parts of the film in favour of Diffring, who carries a certain air of menace, but simply fails to give the role the level of gravitas it needs, with Cushing's absence becoming all the more pronounced as a result.

This is far from the best that Hammer was capable of. Hardcore fans will undoubtedly find something to enjoy – indeed, it is far from awful, with a hideous, skin-flaking climax that lives long in the memory – but even they would be hard-pressed to deny that this isn't anything above pedestrian.
Steve Wright







SciFiNow scored **5** for The Man Who Could Cheat Death
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



The Hound Of The Baskervilles
Cushing and Lee team up in this none-more-gothic take on Sherlock Holmes.

TRIVIA ANTON DIFFRING WAS CAST IN *THE MAN WHO COULD CHEAT DEATH* AFTER PETER CUSHING TURNED THE ROLE DOWN.


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Season One

GOTHAM Batman begins

Details 15 // 930 mins // Blu-ray · DVD · iTunes · blinkbox · **Netflix** // 5 October
Creator Bruno Heller **Cast** Ben McKenzie, Donal Logue, David Mazouz **Distributor** Fox



Aside from the casting and the coolness, it's usually the grey areas that make Batman so fantastic. It's what sets him, and his story, apart from many of America's superheroes: Batman isn't red, white and blue, but a shade of grey, and it's the grey areas he revels in: on the surface, Bruce Wayne is just a billionaire fighting street-level thuggery. At its core, it's obviously a tale of what turmoil can drive you to become.

From the Keaton/DeVito dynamic in *Batman Returns* to the Greek tragedy of *The Dark Knight*, the good things in *Batman* adaptations have historically been nuances, irony and detail. It's both fitting and obvious to pen a prequel of Wayne's world, but again, the idea of *Gotham* is one that treads fine lines indeed. It feels halfway between a guaranteed tune-in and a huge artistic gamble.

Gotham aims to mine deeper than a blockbuster can. It looks like a noir cop show, with James Gordon (Ben McKenzie) cleaning up the streets of the city, and the show dives further into the shadows of the hero's city than a *Batman* movie ever could. It takes Nolan's ambition to create character arcs that only a TV show can, and casts the hugely underrated Sean Pertwee (*Elementary*) as an edgier Alfred, David Mazouz (*Touch*) as a young Bruce and Robin Lord Taylor (*The Walking Dead*) as a mercurial Penguin.

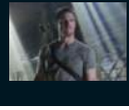
The show glistens often. McKenzie holds *Gotham* together as moral compass Gordon, and mazy plots weave at healthy paces. It's less bombastic than you may expect, and there are intriguing parallels when you relate Gotham to modern-day American cities, crying out for heroes in times of crime. Superhero stories should always have one eye on the present-day's world, but *Gotham*'s downfall is that it gazes too much at its own universe's past.

Gotham has its flaws, but perhaps none more so than the fact that it doesn't feel unique enough. The stars are famous *Batman* villains, who recur maybe too much. It doesn't deviate too far from canon, and *Gotham* can't settle on a tone: gritty, adult drama, or tongue-in-cheek, comic-heavy telly. *Gotham* excels when it seeks new layers of the city's story, but it's perhaps fitting that often, it can't escape from its own shadow.

Mark White

SciFiNow scored **7** for Gotham Season One
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



Arrow
Oliver Queen returns to fight city crime in this sleek, more-realistic-than-the-comic cult favourite.



Season Five

THE WALKING DEAD Still hobbling along

Details 18 // 721 mins // Blu-ray · DVD // 28 September **Creator** Scott M Gimple
Cast Andrew Lincoln, Norman Reedus, Melissa McBride, Steven Yeun, Lauren Cohan, Chandler Riggs, Danai Gurira **Distributor** Entertainment One



Season Five of *The Walking Dead* kicks off in style with the group captured at Terminus and about to be killed by the cannibalistic brutes that live there. After they escape, they remember just how horrible everything is, and everyone suffers horribly for the duration.

Every plot point recently seems to be the same one: the one that uses the zombie apocalypse as a metaphor for the human condition. "Are the Walkers the real monsters? Or are we?" Shut up, Rick. We get it. Get over yourself. Every time he makes a dramatic leadership speech in the glowing firelight about the woes of being human, it becomes more difficult to resist the urge to throw something at him. The preachy deepness of Season Five is relentless. It's about as subtle as a sword to the face.

The group go through that whole to-trust-or-not-to-trust routine twice more throughout the season, once in a hospital filled with dictators and perverts, and again in a cute little cul-de-sac called Alexandria. The latter is fairly interesting, given that this is the first place the group has had access to running water and electricity for a long time. Rick (Andrew Lincoln) has a shave. Carol (Melissa McBride) starts baking. It's all very bizarre. The Alexandria residents themselves aren't that exciting, but we probably just need time to get to know them. They all join in with the human condition one-liners too. Even Carl (Chandler Riggs)'s crush Enid (Katelyn Nacon) has a particularly deep moment: "This is their world. We're just living in it." Eurgh! Shut up. Don't ever speak again.

These are all just details. Terrible dialogue aside, the shockers are still as good as they ever were. Standout moments include a big confession concerning the antidote in Washington DC, Carol losing her shit in Alexandria, and a deliciously grim sequence in which a foot gets hacked off and barbecued. These kinds of episodes are what makes *The Walking Dead* still worthwhile. Sadly, though, brilliant episodes are usually found sandwiched between boring ones, which can make you wonder why you still bother with it.

Poppy-Jay Palmer



SciFiNow scored **7** for The Walking Dead Season Five
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



Falling Skies
A post-apocalyptic wasteland with the added bonus of being able to steam through to see how it ends.

TRIVIA BEN MCKENZIE VOICED BATMAN IN THE ANIMATED MOVIE *BATMAN: YEAR ONE* (2011). HE'S THE SECOND ACTOR TO PLAY BOTH WAYNE AND GORDON, AFTER BRUCE THOMAS.



Season Three/ Season One

ARROW/THE FLASH

SciFiNow Must see now!

Flash! Ahhhhh! Saviour of the universe!

Details 12 // 975/979 mins // Blu-ray • DVD • iTunes // Out now **Creators** Greg Berlanti, Marc Guggenheim, Andrew Kreisberg **Cast** Stephen Amell, Emily Bett Rickards, David Ramsey/Grant Gustin, Candice Patton, Rick Cosnett **Distributor** Warner Home Video





It says a lot about the rich storytelling potential offered by the CW's take on DC mythos that even in its third season, it still feels like there's a lot more to explore in *Arrow*. Likewise, *The Flash* represents the chance to explore a whole new facet to this world, and it doesn't disappoint.

Starting off with *Arrow*, Season Three sees Oliver Queen (Stephen Amell) on a career high. However, this status quo quickly dissipates with the death of a popular character, giving way to utter carnage as a host of new villains, such as Ra's Al Ghul (Matt Nable), turn up to cause havoc.

Essentially this is the fan wish-fulfilment season: Thea (Willa Holland) finally becomes Speedy; Felicity (Emily Bett Rickards) and Oliver finally get together, and Vinnie Jones finally makes his long-heralded appearance in the CW-verse (let's be honest, it was only a matter of time). The Hong Kong-set flashback sequences are arguably the weakest yet, intended to flesh out Oliver's darker side but instead coming across as rushed, and the guest appearances from Barry Allen (Grant Gustin) seem contrived towards highlighting his maguffin-esque power set. Despite this, it's a solid third season that could have easily acted as a decent resolution – although we're glad it isn't.

Season One of *The Flash* also goes from strength to strength. Any doubts over whether Gustin could hold his own while going solo appear to have been assuaged, as he provides a more carefree and optimistic take on the Scarlet Speedster for those who might have been turned off by Amell's curmudgeonly Queen.

Unlike *Arrow*, *The Flash* ignores the *Dark Knight* route in favour of more outlandish villains (Wentworth Miller's Captain Cold and Emily Kinney's Bug-Eyed Bandit are gloriously wooden highlights), and the soap-opera antics are turned up to the max. Even so, there are surprises: the central love triangle of Barry, Iris (Candice Patton) and Eddie (Rick Cosnett) doesn't go the way you'd think, and Cisco (Carlos Valdes) and Caitlin (Danielle Panabaker) prove to be strong supporting cast members.

With *Legends Of Tomorrrow* on the way, it's nice to see both *Arrow* and *The Flash* continue to impress.

Steve Wright

8 SciFiNow scored **8** for Arrow Season Three
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

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IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



Heroes
Ahead of *Heroes Reborn*, check out the first attempt at epic small-screen superheroics.



MAELSTROM/THE DARK SIDE OF THE SUN

What's going on?

Details 12/15 // 300/330 mins // DVD // Out now **Creator** David Maloney/David Askey **Cast** Tusse Silberg, David Beames, Edita Brychta/Peter Egan, Patrick Mower, Emily Richard **Distributor** Eureka Entertainment





Both penned by Michael J Bird, Eighties supernatural thrillers *Maelstrom* and *The Dark Side Of The Sun* present different takes on the stranger-in-a-strange-land-out-of-their-depth theme.

Maelstrom sees the recently redundant Catherine (Tusse Silberg) visiting Norway after she is mysteriously left a large plot of land on a secluded island by a previously unknown relative. Despite initially receiving a warm welcome, it quickly becomes apparent that things aren't as they seem.

A whole patchwork of influences are involved here, from *Rebecca* and *Rosemary's Baby* to *The Haunting* and *The Wicker Man*. Clearly delivered on a micro budget, *Maelstrom* is at its most effective when at its most minimalist – concrete explanations for what's going on aren't exactly in plentiful supply, and pretty much the entire cast underplays everything, being as stoic and underwhelmed as it's possible to be. Nevertheless, it's an intriguing mystery, if ultimately abrupt in its ending.

The same can also be said for *The Dark Side Of The Sun*, which sees husband and wife Don (Patrick Mower) and Anne (Emily Richard) sharing a borderline telepathic connection that is accepted without question by the world at large. When Don dies while on a photography assignment, Anne tries to complete his task – but in the process attracts the interest of the clearly sinister Raoul (Peter Egan), who may or may not have had something to do with Don's demise.

While this is less subtle than *Maelstrom*, it definitely has more layers to it. With Anne trying to reconcile her grief at her loss with her inability to move on, all the while trying to uncover the truth over what exactly is going on, there's a lot to get a handle on. Coupled with some genuinely sinister moments, and you have a series that is by shades corny and hammy, yet utterly entrancing at the same time.

Having both aged reasonably well, as well as being refreshingly different from a lot of today's televised supernatural fare, there is a lot to be said for checking out both of these shows.

Steve Wright

6 SciFiNow scored **6** for Maelstrom
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7 SciFiNow scored **7** for The Dark Side Of The Sun
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IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



The Secret Of Crickley Hall
Uncover the mystery of Crickley Hall in this James Herbert adaptation.

TRIVIA AMANDA PAYS, WHO GUEST-STARS IN EPISODE NINE OF *THE FLASH*, ALSO PLAYED BARRY'S MENTOR IN THE 1990 SERIES.

DEFENDERS OF THE REALM

Publisher: Eagle Games // Players: 1-4 // RRP: £69.99

Defenders Of The Realm shares many mechanics with popular cooperative games such as *Pandemic* and *Arkham Horror*, but it also brings plenty of its own exciting ideas to the table. Unlike many other examples of the genre, it's set in a rich fantasy world, which is illustrated by acclaimed artist Larry Elmore. Everything from the board itself to incidental cards features his art, offering a rich level of consistency that can be missing from many other games.

The gameplay in *Defenders Of The Realm* is relatively simple: prevent four dangerous generals from letting their armies reach Monarch City. Sadly, the execution is rather more difficult, mainly because the game is skewed in favour of the opposing forces. The four armies are coloured to tell them apart: Demons (red), Orcs (Green), Undead (black) and Dragonkin (blue), the last of which is led by a gigantic blue dragon. Each army has its own traits too, so the orcs are plentiful and spread far faster than the other armies, while the undead can spread fear in the opposing heroes. While not game-breaking, the abilities are strong, and ensure that the heroes really need to work together to achieve any sort of success.

1 CHARACTER CARDS
There are eight to choose between, ranging from healers to magic users and fighters.

2 DARKNESS SPREADS CARDS
These cards are drawn at the end of each turn, and represent the evil armies' continual advancement.

3 TAINTED CRYSTALS
Used to represent when a region has been completely overrun by the enemy.

4 QUEST CARDS
These handy quests will give you a big advantage when the game finally ends.

5 WAR STATUS BOARD
This marks the increase of the evil armies, causing more pain for the players as generals get defeated.

6 HERO CARDS
Useful cards that give the heroes all sorts of handy abilities or simply let them move around the board.

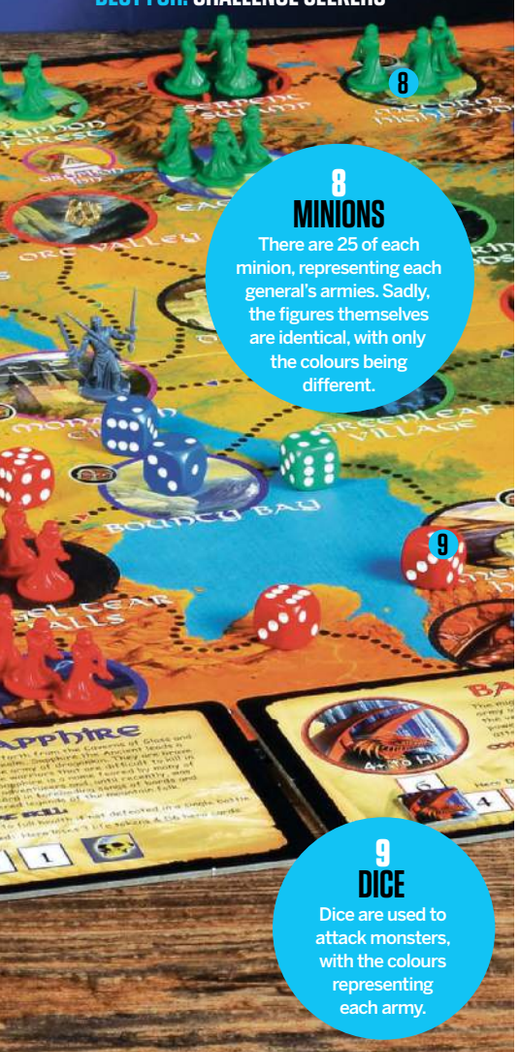
7 GENERAL CHARACTER CARDS
When defeated, this card is turned over, with the victor gaining a powerful ability to use in-game.

Fortunately, the heroes themselves are far from defenceless, and there are eight to choose from, ranging from clerics and rangers to eagle riders and rogues (with more available in expansions). Each character has three distinctive abilities that make them stand out from each other – far more than they might in other cooperative games. We particularly like the ranger, but that's mainly from playing as them all the time in *Dungeons & Dragons* back in the day.

The actual gameplay is tight and fast-paced, with turns being divided into three distinct sections: Daytime (heroes perform a number of actions, from fighting to moving based on their current health points), Evening (new hero cards are drawn for the heroes to use) and Nighttime (dangerous Darkness Spreads cards are drawn). Players must defeat all armies and their generals in order to win, while also trying to complete random quests that can range from retrieving magical items to visiting certain locations. Quests are important, as along with general cards (earned by defeating said boss) they determine the overall winner if the heroes are successful.

Defenders Of The Realm is a satisfyingly challenging cooperative game with a strong theme and glorious presentation. It's not the easiest game to win, but it becomes all the more satisfying when you finally do.

BEST FOR: CHALLENGE SEEKERS



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4. OMNATH, LOCUS OF RAGE £6



5. RUINOUS PATH £5

DC Comics Deck-Building Teen Titans

Publisher: Cryptozoic Games // **Players:** 2-5 // **RRP:** £32.99

Cryptozoic continues to build upon its popular series with another standalone expansion, this time based on the Teen Titans. The available heroes are good, including Red Robin, Beast Boy, Superboy, Wonder Girl and Raven, while early adopters who buy the original run will also get Kid Flash thrown in for free. Their individual powers are well balanced, with many of them having the ability to draw extra cards (an always useful skill in deck-building games).

Mechanically, *Teen Titans* is largely similar to the rest of Cryptozoic's deck-building games, meaning you start off with a small selection of cards, buying individual cards as you slowly create a bigger, more powerful deck that will hopefully take down super villains such as Slade Wilson, Harvest, Psimon and Superboy Prime. There's a good mix of available locations, equipment, hero and villain cards, although most will be largely unrecognisable to those who are unfamiliar with the franchise. It won't really affect your enjoyment of the game, but will inevitably add flavour for long-time fans.



The biggest change to past games is that there are now several cards with ongoing effects, meaning it stays in place, allowing you to constantly use it each turn instead of typically throwing it away. *Teen Titans* remains interchangeable with all previous expansions too, ensuring plenty of longevity for those that pick it up.

BEST FOR: DC FANS

Game Of Crowns

Publisher: AEG // **Players:** 3-9 // **RRP:** £23.99



The most impressive aspect of *Game Of Crowns* is that it caters for up to nine players. Otherwise, this is a pretty dull offering from AEG that does a poor job of capturing the HBO show that it's trying to emulate.

Games take place over three rounds, with players being able to do one of two actions: exchange or play a card. Exchanging is as basic as it sounds, with all players putting a card forward and an agreement being made, with additional cards being placed out until a deal is finally made. Playing cards is basic too, due to few cards being actually playable. Attacking is ridiculous, as there is very little incentive for other players to get involved.

Ultimately, you're trying to gain more victory points than anybody else, and you're effectively trying to match groups of cards, kind of like with games such as *Go Fish*, but there's very little else to it. Despite being pitched as a game of diplomacy and betrayal, there's very little alliance building and betrayal going on. It's simply about collecting cards and it's thematically poor. It's certainly a decent introduction to the genre, but it's going to disappoint anyone that's looking for a little more meat or is a fan of George RR Martin.

BEST FOR: NEW GAMERS

Expansion Of The Month

DICE MASTERS: AGE OF ULTRON

Publisher: Wizkid Games // **Players:** 1-2 // **RRP:** 17.99

The sixth *Dice Masters* expansion is the third to be set in the Marvel universe. It features a decent number of heroes, including Hulk, Thor, Iron Man and Captain America, and also throws in a very powerful Ultron. Additionally, it introduces a new play mechanic called Teamwatch, which enhances any characters that share the same affiliations. While the dice feel well balanced, there still doesn't feel like enough to have a solid game between two people. It remains fun however (if a little too random at times), while the ability to crossover with the recently released *Dungeons & Dragons* set shouldn't be sniffed at.



Do You Remember?

SPACE CRUSADE: MISSION DREADNOUGHT

Before Halo, there was this

Although it was never as popular as its fantasy stable mate *Hero Quest*, Space Crusade still received plenty of fan support. This was most obvious due to the release of two expansions: *Eldar Attack* and *Mission Dreadnought*.

It introduced the mighty chaos dreadnoughts, huge robotic killing machines that could quickly decimate a squad of space marines. The tables were evened with the marines' access to heavy duty weapons that were perfectly designed for ripping apart the huge metallic behemoths. Little wonder it now sells for around £100.



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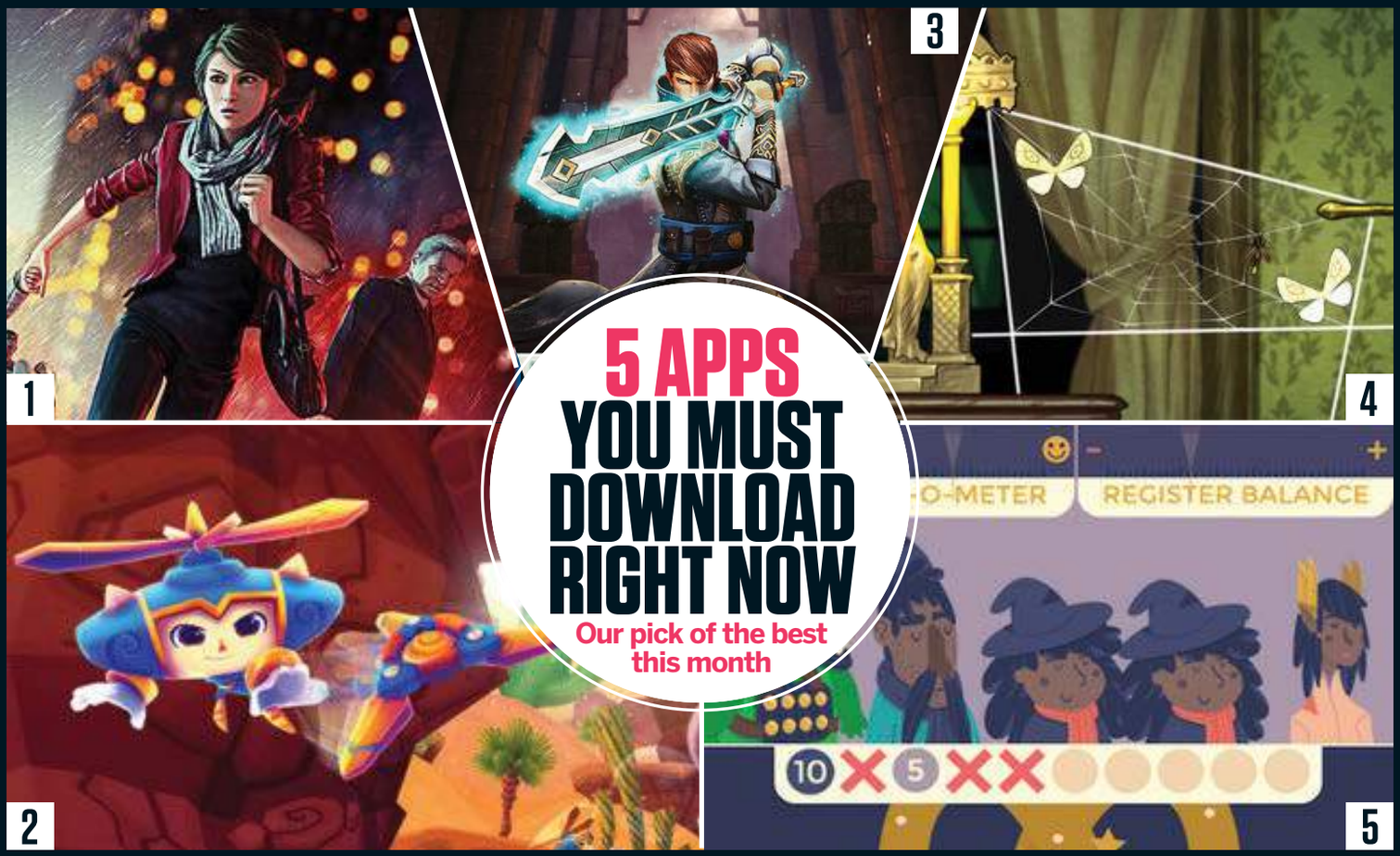
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Our pick of the best this month

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1 When a young boy with supernatural abilities is targeted by an evil politician, his fate rests in your hands. Playing as a kick-ass child-protection officer and using the boy's psychic skills, the pair of you must solve brain-busting puzzles and seek out hidden objects that will assist you in defeating the system and sticking it to the man. The downside is only the trial is free.

BEST FOR: PSUPER PSYCHICS





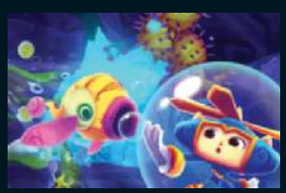
HEROKI

FOR: IOS
PRICE: £1.49/$1.99



2 When Doctor N Forchin and his evil accomplice Vapor plot to steal a powerful amulet called the Emerix, the idyllic sky village of Lavantia finds itself in grave danger. Cute as a button but more powerful than Forchin expects, Heroki uses his trusty propeller-powered hat to fly, fight and freefall over lush islands, jungle, ocean and desert landscapes. *Heroki* is a perfect escapism game: with over ten hours of deep gameplay, it's fun, beautiful and complete jibberish.

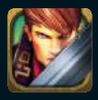
BEST FOR: SECRET HEROES





STORMBLADES

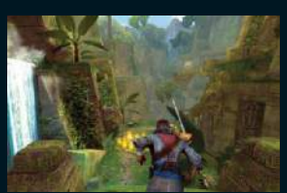
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3 Playing as a young warrior journeying on a young warrior's rite of passage, you start by seeking out ancient ruins and clambering through jungles while keeping your enemies at bay. There's a lot to get excited about with *Stormblades*, but all you really need to know is there are swords. Swords everywhere! Upgrade your swords. Design your swords. Infuse your swords with magical powers. It's impossible to have a bad time when there are *this* many swords around.

BEST FOR: SWORD MASTERS





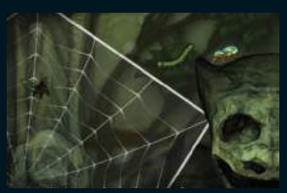
SPIDER: RITE OF THE SHROUDED MOON

FOR: IOS
PRICE: £3.99/$4.99



4 Become an eight-legged critter and use your tiny form to explore an abandoned mansion while escaping predators and catching your own prey. It is spooky, fun and pretty quirky: it's based on a 'real time, real weather' concept, which means when it's dark outside your own window, it's dark in the game. When it's raining in real life, it also rains in the game. Is that cool or what?

BEST FOR: ARACHNOPHILES





CHANGE WIZARD

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5 See if you can make it working in magical thrift store with *Change Wizard*. Take your place behind the cash register at Wizard Pantry, the shop that wizards, witches and sorcerers from across the land visit to purchase their potions ingredients, magic wands and everything in between. Use your noodle to add up purchases, count money, and hand over the correct change. Make sure it is the correct change, mind: you definitely don't want to short-change a sorcerer!

BEST FOR: MATHEMATICIANS





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88 Essential Read: Kingdom Come

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Essential read: Kingdom Come

A seductive marriage of phenomenal artwork and an iconoclastic story, Kingdom Come is one of the key comic-book series of the Nineties. Sadly, its creators argued almost as much as its warring heroes...

WORDS **MATTHEW HANDRAHAN**

Superheroes first rose to prominence as beacons of hope, fighting for justice and the good of all humanity. Inner turmoil and moral outrage had little part to play in comics until the Eighties, when a string of seminal works by writers like Frank Miller and Alan Moore placed superheroes in a realistic context for the first time. If there really were people compelled to risk their lives battling the criminal underworld, what would they be like? What would drive them? If a person truly developed the powers of a god, how would it alter their values and the way they see the world?

Answers to these questions were artfully described in *Watchmen* and *The Dark Knight Returns*, among others, and for the first time the medium gained some of the artistic credibility it had been denied for over half a century. Validation of this kind can be intoxicating, and subsequent generations of artists, writers and editors gleaned only the most literal of messages from the breakthrough: that grit, darkness and brutality were essential aspects of creative maturity. Over time, pessimism and violence became ubiquitous in comics, even for pre-established superheroes.



SYNOPSIS

It is the year 2020, and there are now so many heroes that only Superman can possibly keep track of them all, and doing so tests even his otherworldly reserves of strength and persistence. This new breed is egotistical, fighting each other almost as often as the villains. Following the death of Lois Lane at the hands of the Joker, Superman decides to retire. In the aftermath of his decision, so do many of his contemporaries.

Without his steadying influence the new generation runs amok, causing a major incident; the American Mid-West including Superman's childhood home of Kansas, is turned into a radioactive wasteland. Incensed, Superman gathers his former allies and reforms the Justice League, sparking a civil war among superheroes and a global catastrophe from which there may be no escape.



He is now one of the most prominent and successful writers working in comics, and no single project did more for his reputation than a four-part series published in the mid-Nineties, when the "grimness" was its peak: *Kingdom Come*, at once a tribute to the DC universe of superheroes and a withering assessment of the industry.

Though still relatively early in his career, Waid had been primed for the task almost since birth. The first comic ever placed in his hands was *Batman* #180. It was 1966, Waid was three years old, and the *Batman* television series has just started its run. Combine those factors with the relative scarcity of Marvel comics in his home state of Alabama, and Waid was only ever going to fall on one side of the greatest debate in comics. He was DC through and through, and when he wasn't reading comics he looked toward the day when he might be able to make them.



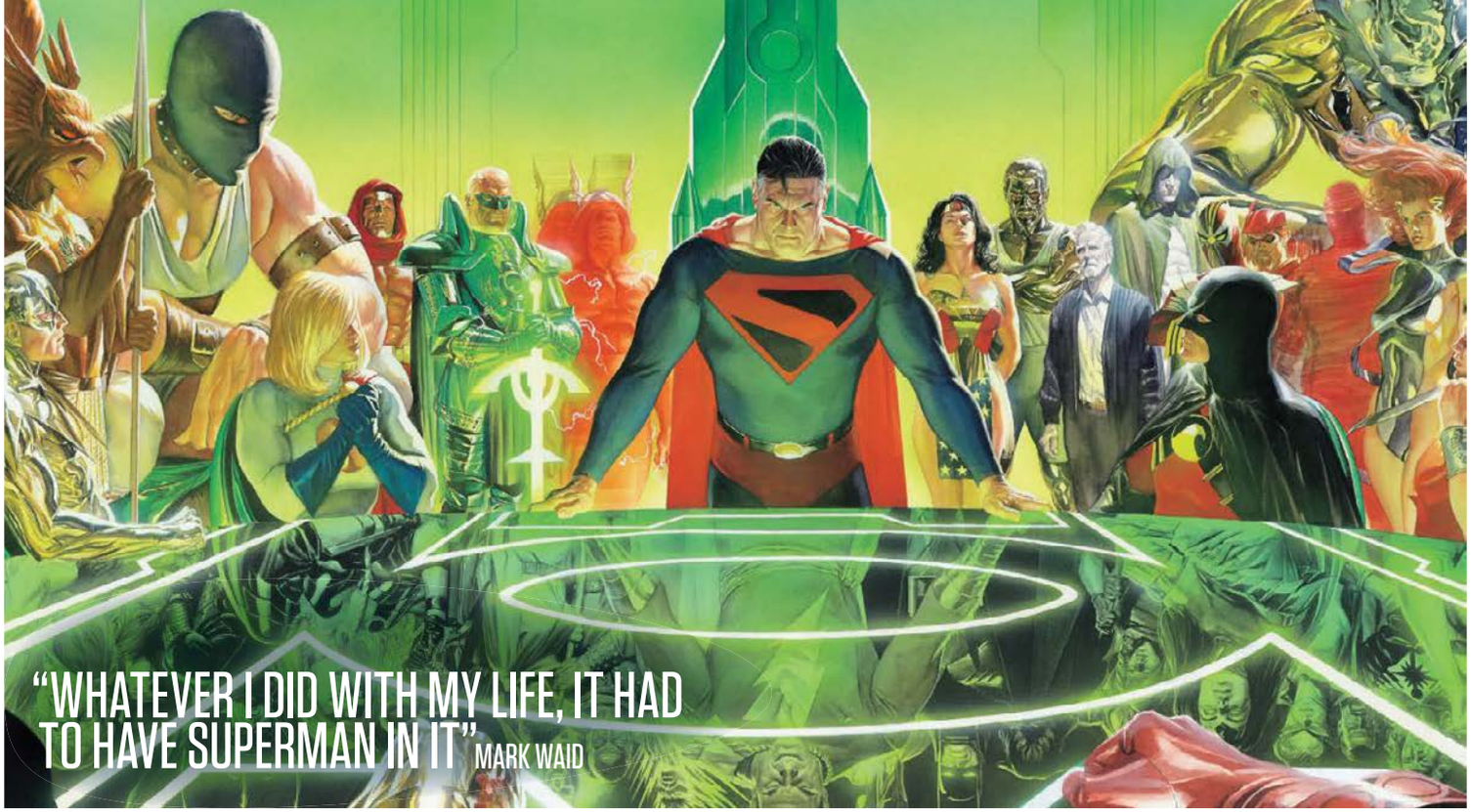
Inevitably, Superman and Bruce Wayne (left) clash over philosophies.



"Whatever I did with my life," Waid told *Ain't It Cool News*, "it had to have Superman in it."

At first, though, Waid had to settle for merely writing about them, turning his college studies in Journalism and English into a tentative career as a writer for trade magazines about the comics industry. Doors opened, and in 1984 he found himself talking to Sal Amendola, an editor at DC who bemoaned the lack of pitches they received for Superman now that Batman's popularity was soaring. It was an opening, albeit a slender one, and yet Waid made it work. He pitched an eight-page story to Julius Schwartz, the legendary DC editor, who bought it on the spot. *Action Comics* #572 contained Waid's first published work as a comics writer. "That remains the greatest day of my professional life," Waid later recalled. "Maybe my entire adult life."

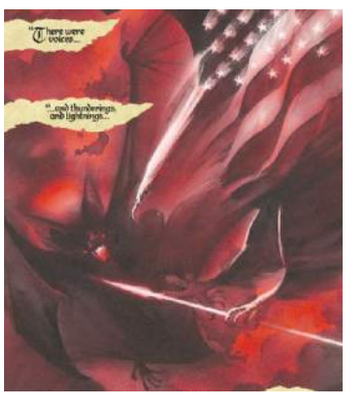
DC would continue to play a major role in Waid's career. He worked in the company's editorial department, reading submissions from some of the biggest names in the business and receiving a peerless education in scriptwriting in the process. His first ongoing assignment was writing *The Comet* at Impact Comics, a DC imprint. His big break came with a run on *The Flash*, a character he had never much cared for, but grew to respect. A successful run on Marvel's *Captain America* did a great deal for his standing, but when he was approached about collaborating with an exciting



"WHATEVER I DID WITH MY LIFE, IT HAD TO HAVE SUPERMAN IN IT" MARK WAID



The art remains one of the best examples of Alex Ross's skill.





As ever, it all comes down to a final battle.



Ultimately, the ending of *Kingdom Come* is an optimistic one.



The story starts with an ominous prophecy from the dying former Sandman, Wesley Dodds.



Mark Waid saw this as a response to the darker comic-book storylines.

Where Have I Seen This Before?

GODS AMONG MEN

ARKHAM ASYLUM: A SERIOUS HOUSE ON SERIOUS EARTH

The use of painting for comic illustration didn't start with Alex Ross, though the realism of his style was unique. One of the better known comic artists to use painting is Dave McKean, who collaborated with Neil Gaiman on *The Sandman*. His cover for *Arkham Asylum* is still one of the best to date.



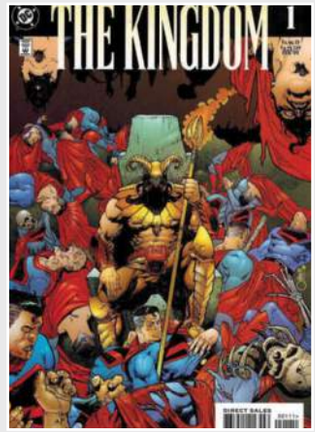


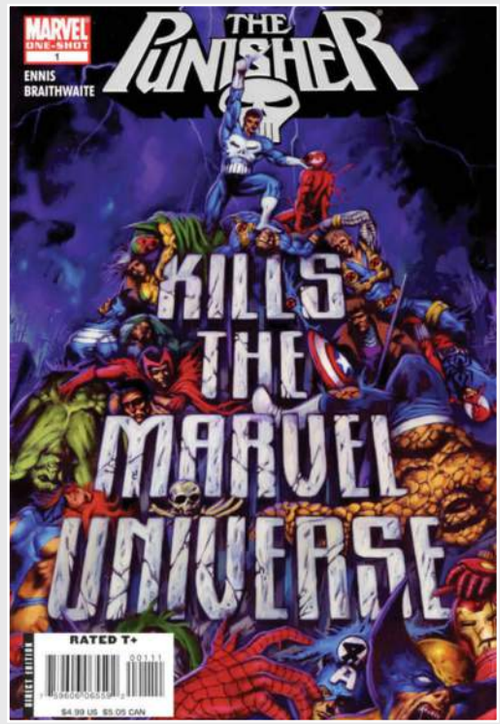
MARVELS

As fascinating as *Kingdom Come* is, many comic fans would have preferred to see a story on that scale play out in the Marvel universe. They do have *Marvels*, which is entirely illustrated with Ross' paintings, but the premise is more focused and personal: a news photographer's account of living in a world where superheroes are a feature of everyday life.

THE KINGDOM

Ross and Waid have different takes on exactly what went wrong on the sequel to *Kingdom Come*, but for the reader all that really matters is that Ross was compelled to leave the project. The resulting series was divisive, attracting criticism for its artwork, and ultimately featuring narrative choices with which Ross vehemently disagreed.





PUNISHER KILLS THE MARVEL UNIVERSE

The superhero war concept taken to an ultra-violent extreme. Garth Ennis, who had just started *Preacher* at this point, imagines that Frank Castle's family wasn't killed by gangsters, but by the crossfire of a superhero battle. His quest for revenge, aided by other victims of superhero fighting, leads to the death of every single Marvel superhero.

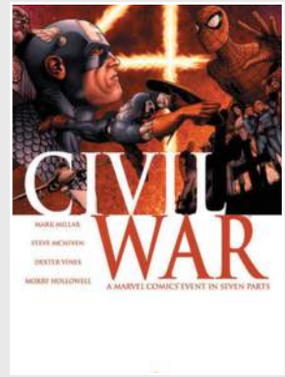


THY KINGDOM COME

Give how *The Kingdom* turned out, many comic fans are fascinated about Alex Ross' ideas for the follow-up. This *Justice Society Of America* storyline, written by Geoff Johns and illustrated by Ross, may be as close as we'll ever get to knowing, even if it isn't a true sequel. We'll just sit here and pretend that it is.

MARVEL: CIVIL WAR

Superheroes going to war with each other has often been used by the major comic labels whenever they need an epic setup for a crossover series. Perhaps the most prominent recent example is Marvel's *Civil War*, in which Captain America leads a revolt. The series was written by Mark Millar, with all the smart-assery that implies.



new artist called Alex Ross, he had no doubts about why he was chosen.

As he explained to *Comic Related*, "I got to play a part in that story based more on my knowledge of the DC universe than anything."



While both men received equal billing on the cover, *Kingdom Come* was Ross's baby. In Waid, he had found someone who loved the DC universe as much as he did, but the premise, structure and way the characters were portrayed came from his imagination, his bulging sketchbook and groundbreaking artwork. Ross has frequently been called the Norman Rockwell of comics. The comparison is justified.

"As I was growing as a young artist, realism seemed the highest point of achievement," Ross said to *Creative Bloq*. "If I see a fantastic illustration with a realistic anchor to it… I believe what I'm being sold that much better."

Ross broke through in 1993 with *Marvels*, which explored the Marvel universe in a similar way to *Kingdom Come* and DC. In a few issues, Ross went from virtually nowhere to being recognised as one of the medium's great artists. His technique allowed him to place characters that were inherently fanciful into a recognisable, relatable world – "to seem metaphorically justified to exist in our contemporary culture," as he later put it to *The AV Club*. On one level, it was just visual realism, but it was realism that had never been applied to these superheroes before. The effect was staggering, and Ross wanted nothing more than to repeat the process for the label that had produced his favourite characters.

"In the time before I sold [*Kingdom Come*] to DC, I was putting down all my thoughts towards every single relevant DC character I could conceive of in their 50-some-year history at that point," Ross said in an interview with *Comic Book Resources*. "There was a way of looking at every one of the Kirby Characters, or every character from the Silver Age, and they had to be represented in some form, whether it be in a majorly changed form or they mostly stayed the same.

"I was taking the tact of if I never got another chance to work with the DC superheroes, I was going to put everything into this one series."

While this may not have been clear to the average reader, Ross's art around

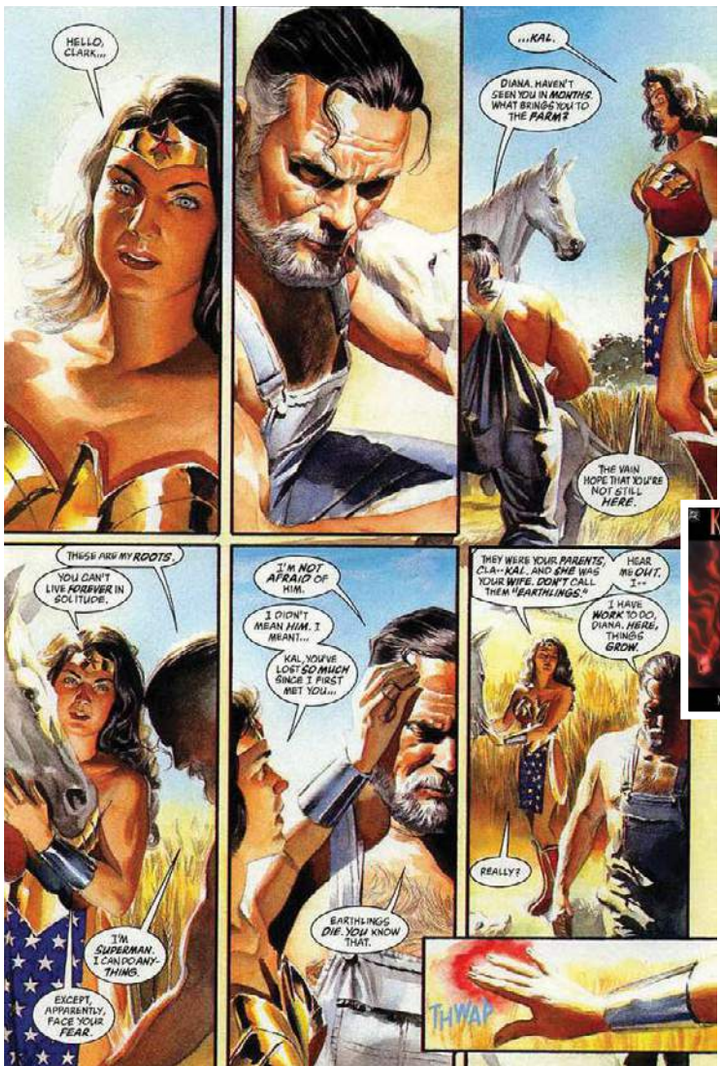
the time of *Marvels* was a rejection of what he saw to be the new status quo in comics. The revisionism of Moore and Miller had been taken up by lesser talents, who had throttled the sense of wonder and joy that once formed the bedrock of the medium's appeal. In tandem, the artists Ross had followed throughout his youth – whose expertise was in realistic figure-drawing – were being replaced by more 'exaggerated' and 'extreme' styles. By combining that classic approach to graphic art with the realistic sheen he could add through his skill with paint, he believed he could reawaken an interest in something that the comic-reading audience was being told it no longer wanted.

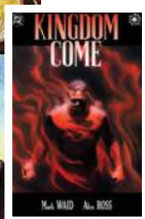


"It's not my instinct to throw out a design that has withstood the test of time for 70 years and say, 'No, now it's this,'" he said to *Bleeding Cool*. "I think that has less to do with what artistic demands dictate and more to do with personalities of the people calling the shots and their egos… Starting with *Marvels*, it was doing the characters as they appeared 25 to 30 years before.

"The truth is, [*Kingdom Come*] was a complete and total retro project. All the character designs I came up with were paying homage to ones from decades gone by. It wasn't really the future so much as it was a tribute to the past."

That reverence to the ideals of the past was present in both *Kingdom Come*'s story – which has the embrace of darker, morally dubious superheroes – and the way Ross recast its characters through his art. The most obvious example is Superman, the story's principal character, who is presented as a middle-aged man, his face lined, his temples just starting to gray. The fact that he has reached a point of emotional crisis is made explicit by the story, but that much can be learned from examining Ross's pristine depictions alone.





"I wanted a bit of a throwback Superman, this brawny huskiness," Ross told *Blastr*. "He seemed like a man with a weight on his shoulders and he had a permanent Eastwood squint… I could graft onto his frame this weight and the idea that he represented the best of idealism and virtue. Not as this innocent figure, but as one who knew the gravity of how the world worked and the responsibility that lay in his hands."

Ultimately, Ross and Waid's differing conceptions of Superman proved to be the most damaging of a series of creative disagreements. Ross wanted him to be the only survivor of the story's climax, both the original superhero and the last one standing. Waid disagreed on the basis that Superman would have to make the wrong call at every decisive moment, and that kind of abject failure should be beyond the character. "Alex's vision was neither a better nor worse ending, just a different one, and one I couldn't get ahold of," Waid said. "There's a story to be had there, but I couldn't find it."

The resulting compromise left a mark. When they were offered the chance to follow *Kingdom Come*, their mutual love for the characters was no longer enough to overpower their differences. The exact nature of what happened has never been agreed upon, with both Ross and Waid mainly recalling trying to do their best in the face of the other's difficult behaviour. A sequel did emerge, *The Kingdom*, but without Ross. The resulting book wasn't nearly as good as it would have been if they'd found a way to work as a team.

Gene Ha, another artist brought in to work on the project, has the most compelling take on the breakdown of their relationship. And if you've read *Kingdom Come*, the irony practically leaps from the page.

"Alex and Mark are the two biggest personalities I know in comics," Ha told *Comic Book Resources*. "Alex is uncannily like Bruce Wayne. I don't know anyone else who can be so creative without tiring. Mark embodies some of the best qualities of Clark Kent and Lex Luthor.

"You can't expect Batman and Superman to collaborate for long outside of the funny pages."

Your Take On The Classic

WHAT YOU THOUGHT @SCIFINOW


"I thought it was an interesting story that showed a different kind of future, and one that isn't post-apocalyptic. #BookClub" **@Jbarnes532**


"Alex Ross is a master artist, and Mark Waid's words are poignant. One of DC's best, and a great stand alone story. #BookClub" **@wierdlybearded**


"Loved it when it first came out. The art & storyline was amazing. Even read the novel which is just as good. #Shazam" **@safcinexile**


"It looks amazing, Captain Marvel is treated as a huge deal. Bruce Wayne is a bit of a maniac" **@NeverMindComics**


"One of the greatest elseworld stories. With layered and complex characters and of course Alex Ross's Visuals are awe inspiring!!!!" **@Moviedudenews**


"Kingdom Come is the perfect superhero story ever published, it got a cleaver plot and a beautiful art. It really a mesterpiece." **@Iftrev**


"One of the best executed 'elseworlds'. The sophisticated writing is matched by the absolutely gorgeous visuals! #KingdomCome" **@LewisAlexRyan**


"A visual myth, pitting legacy against a new age. Bold, poetic and beautiful." **@gizmo151183**

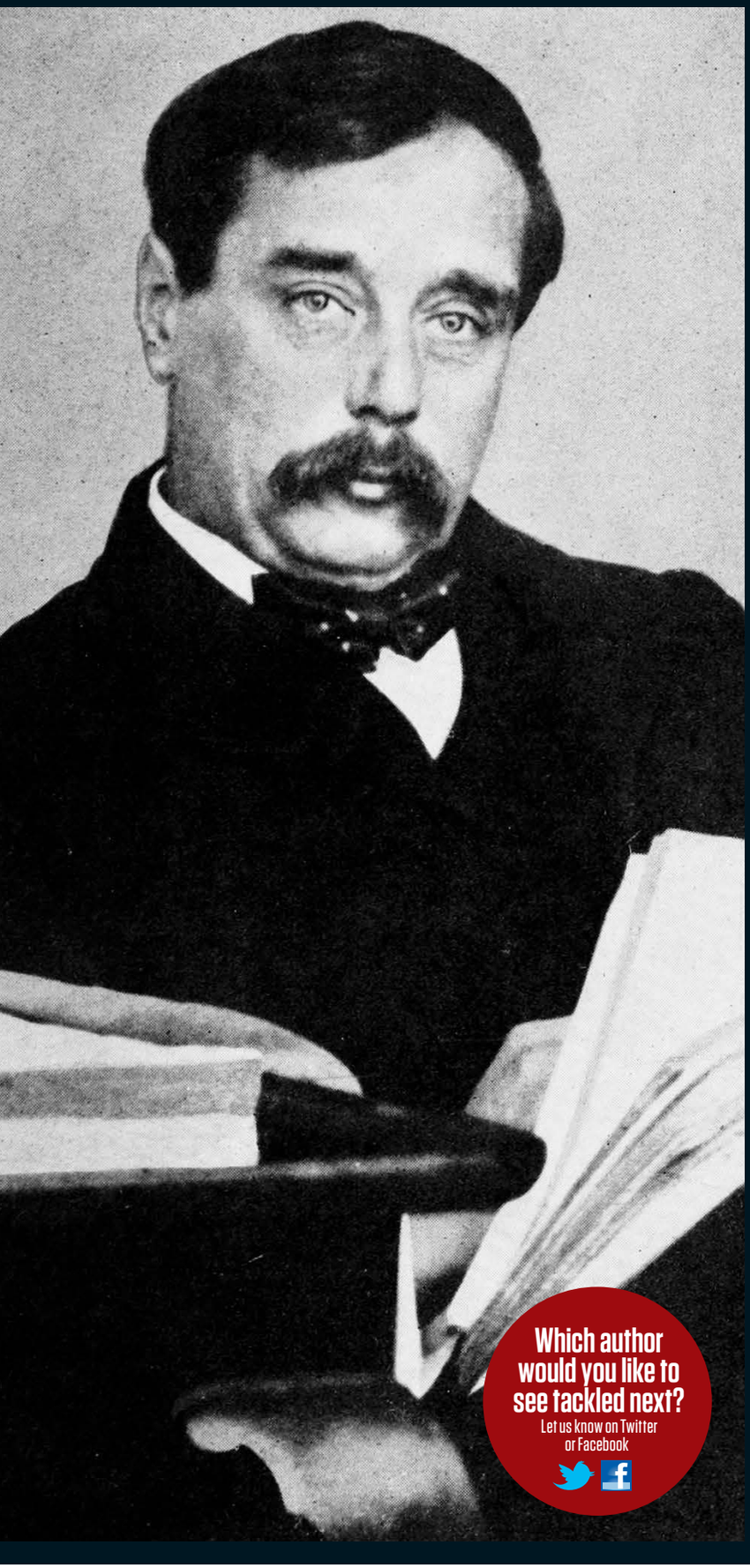

"First time I read it, it was like walking into an art gallery. Kept gazing at every page for nearly half an hour each!" **@TheAhmedRaafat**


"It's a work of art. Beautifully written and illustrated. A story both heartwarming and heartbreaking at the same time" **@Rhys180**


"Such a great series, it even makes (DC's) Captain Marvel interesting. Quite a feat that..." **@Midnightxpress**


"An epic tale of a future no one wants to believe is possible." **@RealJacobQuinn**

What do you think? Let us know on Twitter or Facebook



A Beginner's Guide To HG Wells

Meet the grandfather of modern science fiction

WORDS **JONATHAN HATFULL**

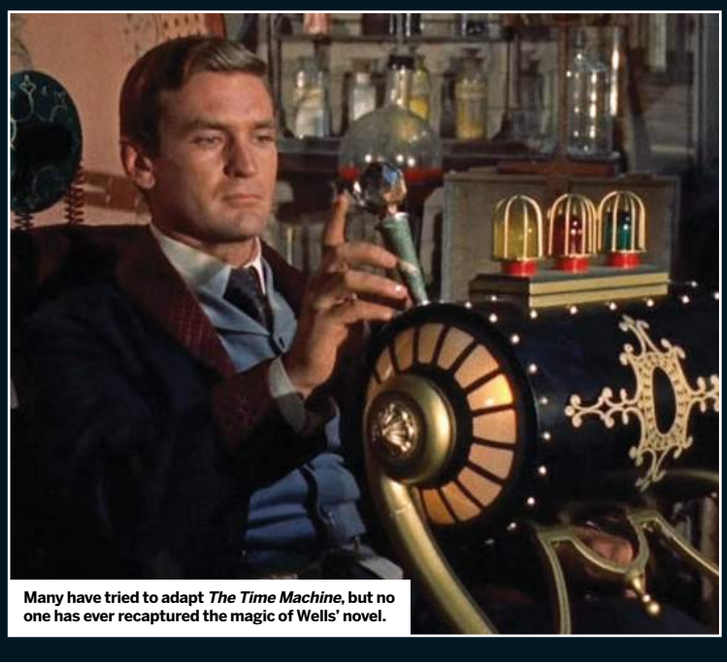
In the space of six years, Herbert George Wells wrote the three novels that would be remembered as his finest work, and which would go on to define the genre for generations of authors. The man behind *The Time Machine*, *The Island Of Dr Moreau*, *The War Of The Worlds* and *The First Men In The Moon* combined science fiction, fantasy, horror and the gloriously mundane with incredible skill, and he has retained his place as one of the true giants of his field.

Born on 21 September 1866 to a working-class family in Bromley, Wells became a voracious reader after breaking his leg as a child. He apprenticed as a draper at the age of 14 to supplement his parents' income, but won a scholarship and developed an interest in biology. He would work as a teacher part time when he lost his scholarship, and in 1895 he published his first two works: the witty *Select Conversations With An Uncle*, and the groundbreaking *The Time Machine*. The latter would, of course, be a bestseller, and over the space of the following few years, Wells delivered some of the genre's greatest works.

Over the course of his life, Wells became increasingly outspoken on issues of social justice, politics and biology. He was vehemently disgusted by racism and wrote frequently about the troubles in South Africa. His politics were those of the far left, but he struggled to find a movement that he found satisfactory, from the Fabians to Stalin himself, who he met and interviewed. His science fiction became less important to him than his politics, and he sadly became increasingly pessimistic in his old age, expressing some worrying views on the subject of eugenics.

However, the quality of his work remains undiminished. The five novels we've selected have directly influenced so many, from the multiple films based on his work to the multitude of references in Alan Moore's *The League Of Extraordinary Gentlemen* (for example). There's no genre author alive who doesn't owe him a debt.

Which author would you like to see tackled next?
Let us know on Twitter or Facebook



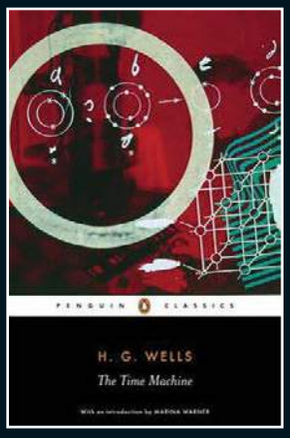
Many have tried to adapt *The Time Machine*, but no one has ever recaptured the magic of Wells' novel.

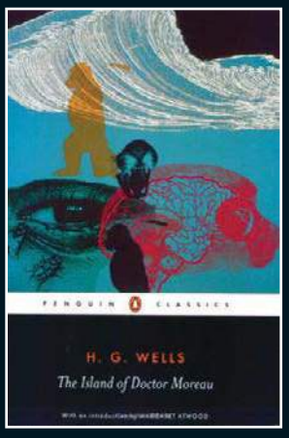


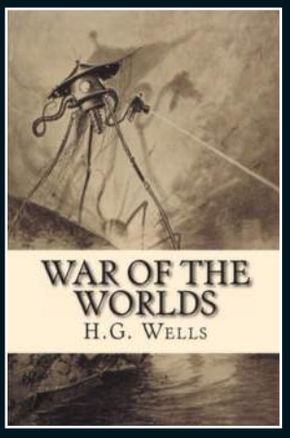
James Whale's *The Invisible Man* remains the best film based on Wells' work.

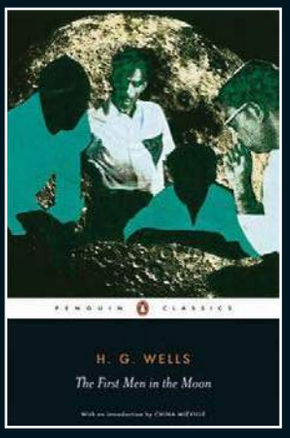


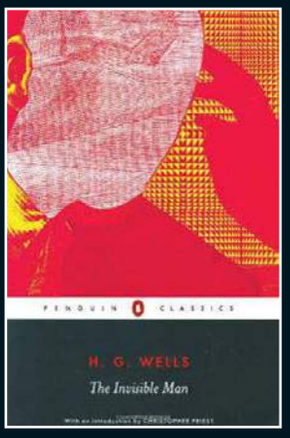
The legendary Ray Harryhausen took on *The First Men In The Moon*.











Forward and back

Good and evil exist in any time

THE TIME MACHINE
Publisher: Penguin Classics
Published: 1895
Price: £5.99

Wells' first novel tells the story of an unnamed Traveller who invents (you guessed it) a time machine. When he travels far into the future, he encounters the peaceful Eloi, who live in total harmony above ground, but are hunted by the vicious subterranean Morlocks. Film adaptations have tended to focus on the adventure aspect, but the sequence towards the end of the novel in which the Traveller witnesses Earth's final days is chilling. It's an adventure that's not afraid to scare.

"I love everything about it. Particularly the Morlocks. Its a great future shock, from a wonderful era. #BookClub" **@DaveNeal33**

Mad science

Playing god with the animals

THE ISLAND OF DR MOREAU
Publisher: Penguin Classics
Published: 1896
Price: £5.99

Moreau's horrifying tale of vivisection, morality and madness has had several adaptations, but no one's ever got it right. It begins with Prendick, an English scientist, who is shipwrecked and finds his way to the titular island, where he discovers that the infamous scientist is trying to turn animals into people. Though painful, the procedures seem to be successful, but as the novel progresses they soon begin to revert back to their former selves.

"This is STILL the creepiest book I've read. Gave me nightmares for ages. It's fantastic. #Bookclub" **@TheCrowLady**

Collision of worlds

The chances of anything coming from Mars...

THE WAR OF THE WORLDS
Publisher: CreateSpace Independent Publishing
Published: 1898
Price: £4.05

Another of Wells' classics to have undergone unsuccessful adaptations. Part of the novel's brilliance is the Wyndham-esque cosiness of the catastrophe, as the scientific community is fascinated by the alien object that lands on a heath in Surrey, before the creature inside incinerates them all. It's only the intervention of a microbial infection that saves the human race; an act of God that has more impact than anything the human race can throw at it. But what if they come back?

"It was the first Sci-Fi book i ever read and started my love of Sci-Fi, excellent book! #BookClub" **@rockingrhys**

Amazing journey

Journey to the centre of the Moon

THE FIRST MEN IN THE MOON
Publisher: Penguin Classics
Published: 1901
Price: £5.99

The casual practicality of Bedford and Cavor's journey to the Moon is striking in its novelty now, as the latter uses the substance he creates (named Cavorite) to propel their craft into space and travel all the way to the Moon. They soon realise that they are not alone when they are captured by the Selenites, a subterranean species. There are plenty of eccentric details, but there are lots of chills too, particularly as Bedford is able to make his escape, but Cavor is not.

"The only one I actually own, but nevertheless as good as all the others, and somewhat underrated. #BookClub" **@Dynvain**

Weird science

What would you do if you couldn't be seen?

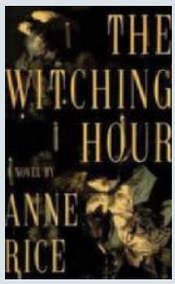
THE INVISIBLE MAN
Publisher: Penguin Classics
Published: 1897
Price: £5.99

James Whale beautifully adapted *The Invisible Man* in 1933, and kept the darkness at the heart of the story. A mysterious man named Griffin arrives in a small town swathed in bandages, and his appearance coincides with a series of crimes. We soon learn that Griffin has perfected a formula to make him invisible, but can't turn back. As Griffin gets desperate, he becomes violent and unstable, planning a reign of terror. It's dark stuff that moves quickly towards its inevitable conclusion.

"The Invisible Man not an easy book to read, always find it hard to find and get into! #BookClub" **@safcinexile**

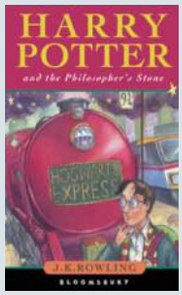
Your Five Witches

CHOOSE YOUR TOP FIVE @SCIFINOW ON TWITTER



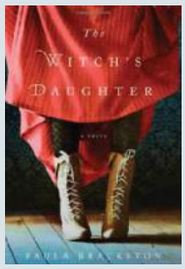
1. Dr Rowan Mayfair

"Dr Rowan Mayfair, from Anne Rice's *The Witching Hour*, she can heal or kill! May have to reread this series #BookClub"
@Cascararogue



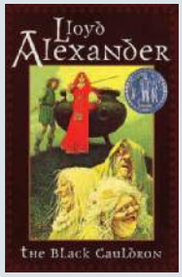
2. Hermione Granger

"Her bookish ways and overall personality remind me of myself as a child (though she's MUCH braver) #BookClub"
@mariaselke



3. Bess Hawksmith

"[From] *The Witch's Daughter* – grounded, courageous, a poetic heart, power with a conscience #BookClub"
@JasShrink



4. Princess Eilonwy

"...From *The Chronicles of Prydain*! Loved that she could be stubborn and childish while still kind and caring. #BookClub"
@m_leigh_g



5. Ogg & Weatherwax

"Granny Weatherwax & Nanny Ogg. A perfect Pratchett double act. #BookClub"
@Hannah-Chapter1

Details **Author:** Zen Cho **Publisher:** Macmillan **Price:** £16.99 **Released:** Out now

SORCERER TO THE CROWN

SciFiNow Must read now!

Anyone for a spot of English magic?

The promotional material for Zen Cho's *Sorcerer To The Crown* is big on the words 'English magic', in an understandable attempt to draw in fans of Susannah Clarke's masterful *Jonathan Strange & Mr Norrell*. While it's tempting to raise an eyebrow at that kind of thing, we're confident that those who enjoyed the adventures of those two English magicians will have a grand old time with Cho's hugely entertaining period tale.

Set in Regency London, it's the story of Sorcerer Royal Zacharias Wythe, who has a lot on his plate when the story begins. As an African man, he's subjected to the (barely) thinly veiled racism of his peers. Those peers also believe that he murdered his predecessor and adopted father Sir Stephen, as well as Stephen's fairy familiar Leofric. Further still, the levels of magic in England are low.

So it's not a particularly easy time to be in London, which is why he agrees to travel to Mrs Daubeney's School For Gentlewitches to lecture the ladies on the dangers of witchcraft. Once there, he realises that English society's views on the dangers of magic in the hands of women are somewhat outdated, and that prodigiously talented sorceress Prunella Gentleman may hold the key to saving everything.

From the opening pages of Cho's debut novel, it's clear that we're in good hands. It is witty, imaginative and great fun, and manages to turn a critical eye on the dusty patriarchy of Regency-era England while it's luxuriating in the joys of fairy kingdoms and improperly behaved familiars.

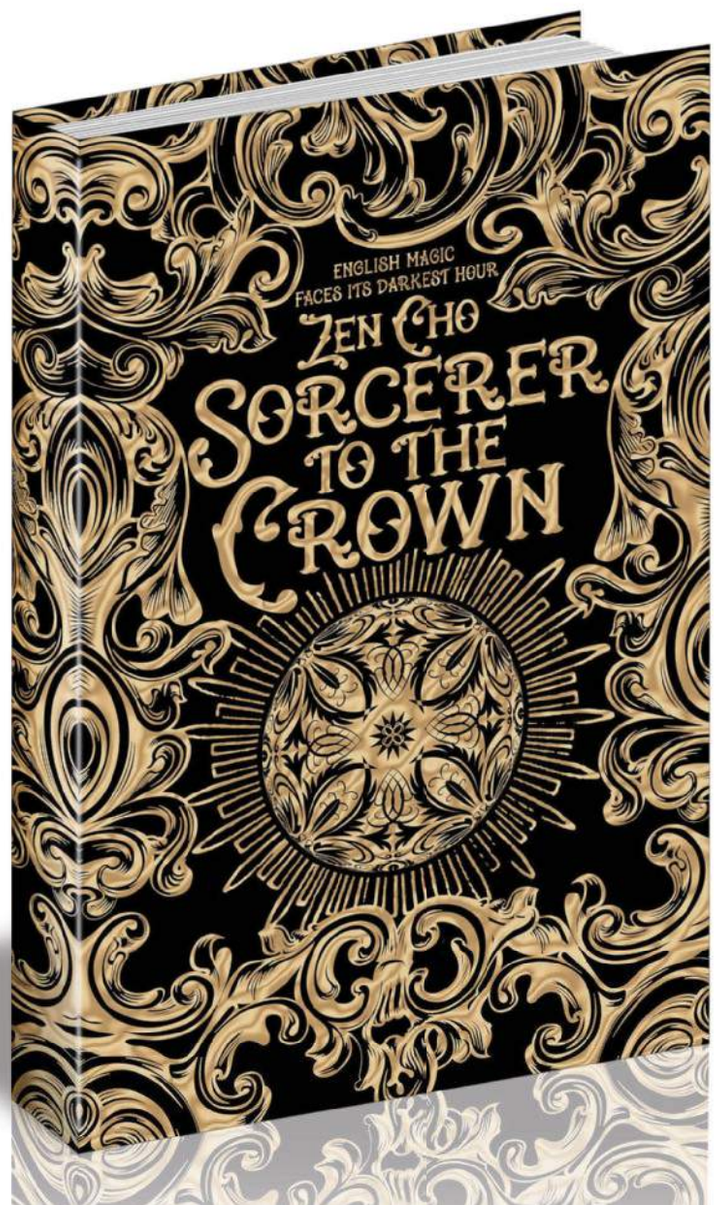
Our two protagonists, Zacharias and Prunella, both find themselves in positions that most members of society think they have no business occupying. The idea of an African Sorcerer Royal is disgraceful to the bulk of his peers, who are happy to blame him for the current poor state of English magic. And Prunella has been encouraged to curb her magic abilities because it's widely believed that the female body isn't strong enough to handle the pressures that the ability would put on such a fragile frame.

The growing relationship between the two of them gives the book its emotional core; Zacharias learns that keeping your head down isn't always the best way to go (and that Prunella is much stronger than he gave her credit for), and she is taught the importance of self-control when you're handling a familiar that might eat you.

The plot is rather straightforward and moves at a brisk pace. Cho litters her story with fantastic little details and vivid supporting characters. At times it feels a little light, but Cho is capable of throwing a sucker punch; some moments provide a genuine shock.

If you're looking for some excellent historical fantasy escapism, this is highly recommended.

Jonathan Hatfull



8

SciFiNow scored **8** for Sorcerer To The Crown

Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE



IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

Jonathan Strange & Mr Norrell
Susanna Clarke
The chances are you've read it already, but why not do so again?

Details **Author:** David A Goodman **Publisher:** Titan Books **Price:** £17.99 **Released:** Out now

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF JAMES T KIRK

Starfleet's finest, in his own words. Sort of...

In The Autobiography *Of James T Kirk*, 'editor' David A Goodman (*Star Trek: Enterprise*) mines this iconic character's back story for fodder, adding emotional depth from his own imagination in an absorbing first-person account of the Starfleet legend.

Kirk narrates his life story, beginning with his childhood in Iowa, through to his cadet training at Starfleet Academy and rise to become their youngest ever captain. The tone of voice feels very Captain's log, and within a few chapters you'll start to hear Shatner's voice as you read.

As you'd expect, many of the big names make an appearance, such as Khan, Carol Marcus and the crew of the Enterprise, and even more obscure figures from Kirk's early career are fleshed out. The real delight lies in how Goodman weaves people and plot strands from the series backwards into Jim's imagined past and thoughts.

Some winks to the camera are more obvious. The Dr McCoy-penned foreword that begins "I'm a doctor, not a writer" hints at a referential tone, but you also have to appreciate nods like Gary Mitchell smirking, "Me with absolute power? Don't you think that'd be a little dangerous?"

It's basically fan fiction, but lovingly done, and you'd expect nothing less from the writer of *Futurama* episode 'Where No Fan Has Gone Before'.

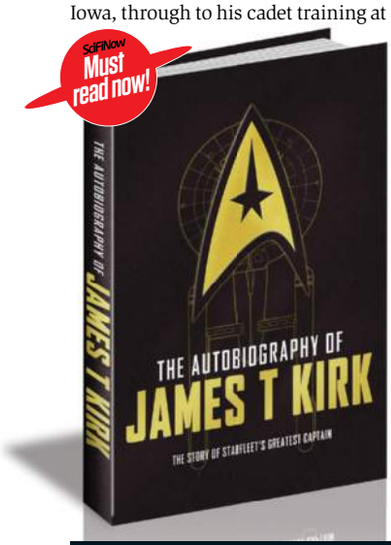
The first half is the strongest, perhaps because it follows the least familiar part of Kirk's life. By the time Captain Kirk takes his place on the Enterprise's bridge, the chapters become short summaries of famous episodes. Inevitably, the book loses its novelty. That said, it retains a bouncy sense of humour and playfulness.

The hardback edition features colour photographs altered as in-universe artefacts. There's even a photo strip of stills from 'The City On The Edge Of Forever' taken in an 'Ellison' photo booth – probably named for the episode's writer, Harlan Ellison.

You don't get more iconic than Captain Kirk. Though fictional, Goodman gives him a very real voice.

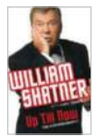
Krystal Sim

SciFiNow Must read now!



SciFiNow scored **8** for The Autobiography Of James T Kirk

Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE



IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

Up Till Now
William Shatner
If Shatner taking over your inner monologue isn't enough, his own self-deprecating autobiography is a good follow-up.

Authors: Scott Westerfield, Margo Lanagan, Deborah Biancotti
Publisher: Simon & Schuster **Price:** 7.99 **Released:** Out now

ZEROES

Heroes or hell raisers?

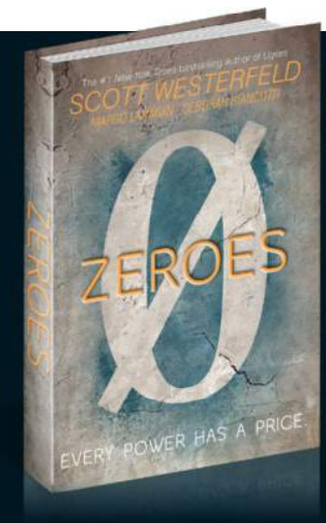
If the words 'Save the cheerleader, save the world' means anything to you then it is imperative you make *Zeroes* the next book on your to-read list. Not only will it stir up memories of a time when Zachary Quinto was the most menacing character on television, it will introduce you to an unusual group of teenagers with superpowers they have no idea how to control.

Estranged 'Zero' Ethan finds himself in the wrong place at the wrong time. The voice within him takes over, but scamming his way out of trouble only serves to unleash a catalogue of events that he cannot deal with. Reluctantly Glorious Leader, Nate dispatches the other Zeroes to help, but having not seen Ethan or his spiteful voice for over a year, emotions are high, and superpowers are not easy to keep in check.

Aimed at the young adult market, *Zeroes* is the first of a collaborative trilogy, with this first instalment introducing us neatly to the main characters and their codenames that represent each of their bizarre abilities. Scam, Crash, Anon, Flicker and Bellwether – for those with little farming knowledge, the lead sheep in a flock – lead the narrative in turn, with so many viewpoints that it's not easy to bond with the characters. In truth some of them are not likeable at all. Scam in particular is a sneaky, pain in the ass with a bad haircut, while Flicker and her sight-through-other-eyes ability is creepy and voyeuristic, quite an achievement for a 15-year old.

Annoying characters aside, there is so much to love about *Zeroes* and not just the unavoidable comparison with Tim Kring's *Heroes*. The children are vulnerable, things rarely go their way, and parents ask too many questions; reality isn't suspended just because this is science fiction. Bring on book two.

Claire Nicholls



SciFiNow scored **7** for Zeroes

Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE



IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

I Am Number Four
Pittacus Lore
John was one of nine, the first three are dead. He is number four, so he must be next.

YOUR READS

What you lot have been reading this month



"@beckysaysrawr's A Long Way to a Small Angry Planet, it's the first time since #Serenity that I want to be part of a ship's crew! #BookClub" @Cascararogue



"Just started Deceptions by Kelley Armstrong, so far, so awesome!! #BookClub" @RockingRhys



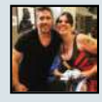
"Fleming, From Russia With Love. Absolutely daft as a brush, love it to bits. Needed something trashy #BookClub" @TheCrowLady



"Morning @SciFiNow I am currently reading Lock In by @scalzi great so far but not sure where it's going #BookClub" @86thFloor



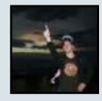
"Started Ready Player One and have Sourcery to start and 20,000 Leagues Under The Sea to finish #bookclub" @meowy24



"Currently I am devouring Tale of The Body Thief. Anne Rice. #VampireChronicles #BookClub" @BinnySedai



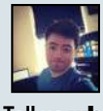
"Reading Last Call by Tim Powers at the moment, it's like a cross between American Gods and The Stand. Highly recommended. #BookClub" @c1der_dr1nker



"The King In Yellow! Thought it would be fun but I'm trapped in Carcosa now, what ya gonna do! #BookClub" @samsheppard8



"Grasshopper Jungle - on my To Read list for forever - by @marburyjack #BookClub" @atesap



"Just finished Going Grey by Karen Traviss. About to start The Martian. #BookClub" @ElliottFinn

Tell us **what you're reading** on Twitter or Facebook

60 SECONDS WITH Bradley Beaulieu



How would you pitch *Twelve Kings*?
Think *A Game of Thrones* meets *Arabian Nights*. *Twelve Kings* is a sweeping epic fantasy told against a backdrop of cruel kings, fickle gods, sandships, blood magic, and a desert city as grand as the soaring palaces of its kings and gritty as the back-alley homes of the desperate yet brutal resistance to their rule.

How important was it to have a strong female lead character like Çeda?
I hadn't really settled on a female lead until well into the ideation process for *Twelve Kings*, but once I had, it was essential to me to make her step outside the roles that women have traditionally held (particularly those in epic fantasy stories). I grew up in a somewhat female-dominated household. My dad was the breadwinner in the family, and so while growing up I saw my mother and twin sisters more. So while it wasn't a conscious thing on my part, their strengths certainly played a role in the formation of Çeda's character, and her mother's as well.

What is your process for envisioning and building a fantasy world like the desert city of Sharakhai?
I'd long wanted to scratch the itch to write a desert story. I can attribute this partly to liking the tales of the *Arabian Nights* (or *One Thousand and One Nights*). I knew I wanted to steep the history of the city in a nomadic, Bedouin-like culture, but I'd probably give the most credit to the *Thieves' World* anthologies for the inspiration for the setting. I loved the city of Sanctuary when I first starting reading the anthologies. The feel of that is what I wanted to explore with Sharakhai.

Have you always been drawn to the fantasy genre?
Yes, I really have. My fantasy gateway book was *The Hobbit*, which I read in third grade. I moved quickly to *The Lord Of The Rings* and really never looked back. Since then I've dabbled in thrillers, mysteries, horror, but science fiction and especially fantasy became my mainstays.



Twelve Kings by Bradley Beaulieu is out now, published by Gollancz.

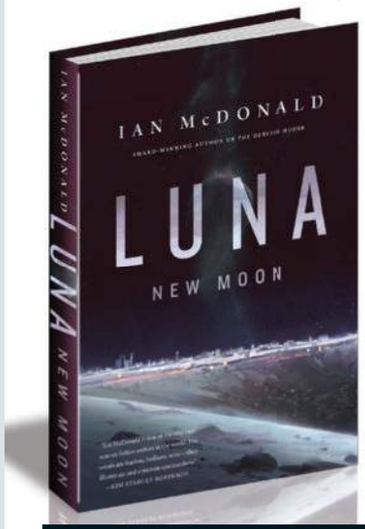
Details **Author:** Ian McDonald **Publisher:** Gollancz **Price:** £16.99 **Released:** Out now

LUNA: NEW MOON

A dark side to the moon

SciFiNow Must read now!

The way that Ian McDonald flawlessly adapts his writing to the relevant culture and country at hand is ingenious, and he showcases this perfectly in his much-lauded previous work. In *Luna: New Moon* though, McDonald has clearly perfected this skill. He exhibits an inherent ability to wide range of them together. More impressively, he does all this while switching seamlessly between the perspectives of members of the Five Dragons – the ruling corporations of the Moon.



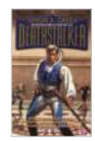
It's not a flashy piece of science fiction; there are no lasers, alien species or gratuitous amounts of spaceships. There is only the truth that the Moon is truly brutal, where everything is for sale or contracted. The price of air changes daily, like the stock market, and there is an overarching fear of death lingering through each of the characters going beyond the dread of running out of oxygen. This is the power struggle of the Five Dragons that runs deep into conflicts within each family itself – among the Cortas of Corta Helio, the Mackenzies of Mackenzie Metals and so on – cementing the harshness of the Moon.

McDonald has done well here to delve into so many members of each family without being overly confusing. It's an intimidating character list at first, and frankly we found some of the secondary characters a bit monotonous. But that aside, McDonald certainly shows off the well-developed Cortas to illustrate his knack for creating dynamic human relationships that encompass the whole Moon.

Luna: New Moon is a world that has been intricately woven together by its author. It's compelling and thought-provoking, and all without relying on overbearing sci-fi clichés. Brilliantly done.

Carrie Mok

9 SciFiNow scored **9** for Luna: New Moon
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE



IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

Deathstalker
Simon R Green
Expect politics, family feuds and detestable villains in this gory space opera about a colossal human empire.

Authors: CJ Daugherty, Carina Rozenfeld **Publisher:** Atom Books
Price: £6.99 **Released:** Out now

THE SECRET FIRE

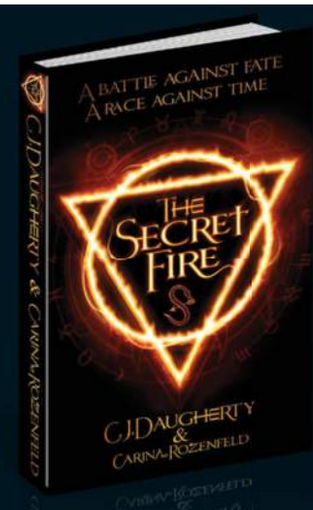
Burn after reading

Most teenagers feel like they're going to live forever. Not Sacha, though. He knows exactly when he'll die: on his 18th birthday, like every first-born son in his family for as long as anyone can remember. He's resigned to his fate until his teacher pushes him into accepting tutoring from Taylor, a girl whose focus on her future reminds him of everything he's going to miss out on. But there's another reason their paths have crossed, and Sacha's fate might not be as sealed as he thinks.

A collaboration between English young adult writer CJ Daugherty (The *Night School* series) and French children's science fiction author Carina Rozenfeld (*The Sentenials Of The Future*), the novel itself is split in two, with Sacha in Paris and Taylor in Oxford. This adds an extra layer of complication to their inevitable romance, on top of all the magical goings-on, and it's genuinely exciting when they finally meet in person.

But aside from the geographical quirks, *The Secret Fire* feels a lot like any other paranormal romance, right down to the fact that Sacha is brooding and mysterious, while Taylor is a law-abiding teacher's pet who doesn't know how pretty she is. There's even a cringe-inducing makeover scene in a Parisian boutique where Taylor discovers the joy of short skirts.

It's a shame it's so generic, because it's an easy and absorbing read that would otherwise be pretty enjoyable. Unfortunately, it's also only half a story, ending on a big fat 'TBC'. Multi-part series are par for the course in YA, but it's rare to see it done quite this obnoxiously. As cute as Sacha and Taylor's romance promises to be, there's just not enough incentive to wait around for the second book when there are so many similar stories out there, and with far more satisfying endings. It's a fun read, but there's not enough to it to make you want to come back for more.



Sarah Dobbs

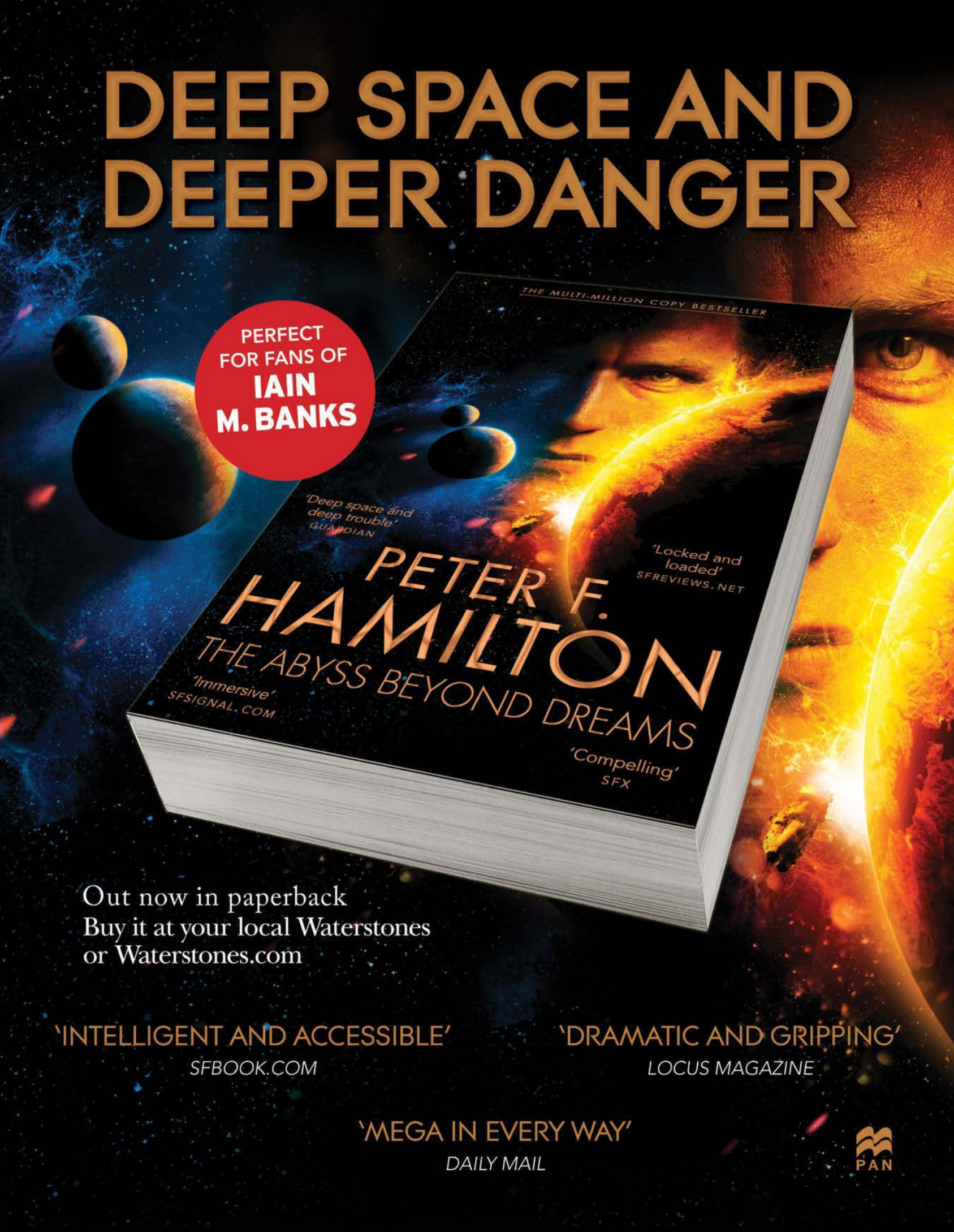
6 SciFiNow scored **6** for The Secret Fire
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE



IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

City Of Bones
Cassandra Clare
A girl discovers a hidden magical world and falls for a sexy demon hunter.

DEEP SPACE AND DEEPER DANGER



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60 SECONDS WITH Alex Marshall

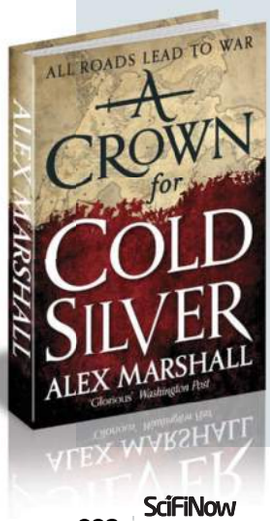
What would be your quick pitch for *A Crown For Cold Silver*?
Psst, hey kid! How do you like the sound of epic fantasy and pulp weirdness going into a mixi along with gallows humour, quality grimdark©, and modern sensibilities? You into aging sword-slingers hitting the road for revenge and locking horns with brash new heroes, sinister cults and worse wizards, and more monsters and devils than you can shake a staff at? First hit's free, just step into this lightless portal to a realm most mortals just call the First Dark...

Do you remember what the first seed of the idea for the novel was?
The first thing that came to me became the first scene in the book – the classic fantasy setup of a quiet village wiped out by marauding baddies, but instead of the ubiquitous sole survivor being a scrappy youth she's a pensioner with an epic past and a devilish dog.

Who are your biggest inspirations?
Conan the Cimmerian, Jirel of Joiry, Steerpike, Imaro, Elric of Melnibone, Red Sonja, Cugel the Clever, Beowulf, Gardner's Grendel, Xena, Gatsu, Gandalf the Grey, and the list goes on. That was what you meant, yes?

How has it been seeing the incredible reaction to the novel?
As exciting as it is encouraging. Also a wee bit daunting, since I'm still writing and nothing gives a writer the fantods like knowing that expectations are running high.

Can you give us a teaser about the next book in the *Crimson Empire* series?
More magic, more monsters, more metal, more problems. A Blade of Black Steel sees our cast of characters facing the consequences of their schemes and plots, and however well-intentioned their motives were, trafficking with devils and contributing to a diabolical ritual that has remade the world has some very big consequences indeed. The kind with teeth. Readers who love fantasy tales that feature the return of an ancient evil may be especially intrigued...

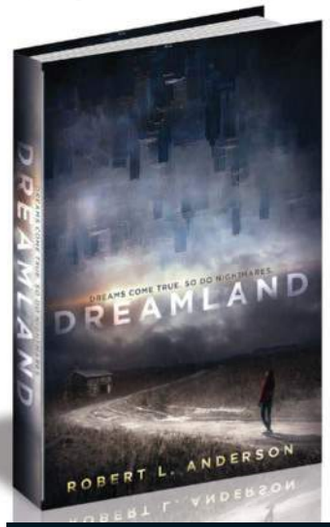


A Crown For Cold Silver by Alex Marshall is available to buy in paperback now, published by Orbit.

Details **Author:** Robert L Anderson **Publisher:** Hodder and Stoughton **Price:** £12.99 **Released:** Out now

DREAMLAND
My dream is better than yours

What's better than dreaming? Breaking into other people's dreams, apparently. As a young girl, Odea discovered an incredible power that had laid dormant inside her – the ability to walk other people's dreams. Armed with three rules – don't change anything, don't walk the same person's dreams more than once, and never be seen – Odea observes dreams from afar. When Connor moves into the house next door, however, the rules are swept aside as Odea invades his sleep night after night. It's not without consequences, as the monsters begin their hunt for the dream walker.



It's a well-written book with plenty of detail, and the narrative provides a pleasantly naïve tone that's easy to associate with 17-year-old Odea. Characters are well developed and build a more emotional read – it's particularly charming to experience Odea's growing infatuation with Connor, and any reader may well recognise the feelings of self-consciousness that Anderson has nailed on the head.

Despite being an engaging read though, it feels fairly unsubstantial. There are whole scenes within the book that feel unnecessary, and for a generally fast-paced read, it tends to lose a little bit of momentum in these sections. For a majority of the story you're left in the dark about Odea's incredible power, and with nothing to sate your desire for knowledge, it can be hard to plough on. On top of this, the plot itself seems patchy at best, and despite an attempt to resolve any mysteries towards the end of the novel, it's fundamentally flawed in that key elements of the story are implausible and far-fetched.

Dreamland may not go down as a classic in the canon of literature, but if you can look past the frustrations of mystery and momentum, it's a worthwhile read.

Philippa Grafton

6 SciFiNow scored **6** for Dreamland
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE



IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...
The Lathe Of Heaven
Ursula K Le Guin
When a man discovers he can make his dreams a reality, he turns to doctors to help, but they have other plans.

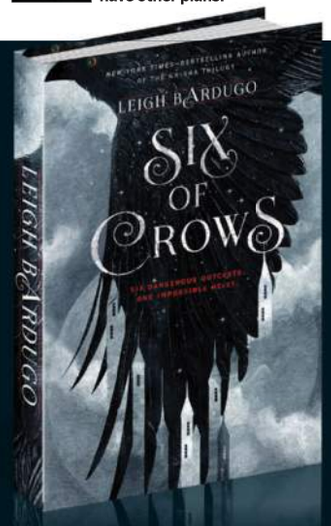
Author: Leigh Bardugo **Publisher:** Indigo **Price:** £9.99 **Released:** 29 September

SIX OF CROWS: A GRISHA NOVEL
Let me make you an offer...

Six Of Crows, Leigh Bardugo's latest Grisha-focused novel, is not one that requires much knowledge of the previous books, though a little may help. It is at its core a heist tale, and in that sense it's a great story. The typical motley crew of magic-users, thieves, canny individuals and experts each have their own valued skill to bring to the ultimate goal of breaking into a never-before-breached military stronghold. It's a little formulaic, and offers little to no surprises, but this blend of character ability works well.

However, within the grimy, gritty world that Bardugo has constructed, it makes sense for her characters to be hardened and wise beyond their years, but this band of youths just doesn't feel particularly realistic. That's not to say they're not engaging, and they certainly do let their emotions take over the situation, but there's something in the way that they interact with each other that seems stilted. Their character flaws only seem to remain as long as the story needs them to, conveniently softening only in times it would drive the plot forward. There are touching moments, but they feel rushed, while conversations between two characters form too much of the story.

Still, there are some excellent settings here – the city of Ketterdam is particularly well-realised, with an extensive and believably murky history. There's plenty of action too, and it's gripping and tense, but each exciting set piece is slowed down with conversations that seem more concerned with conveying the back story of the characters involved than with driving forward the plot neatly and realistically. Ultimately, if you like your band of anti-heroes chatty and full of angst, then you can throw another point on the score, but for a world so well-formed and with the heist story told well, we're hoping that Bardugo's next instalment will provide a similarly high level of character development.

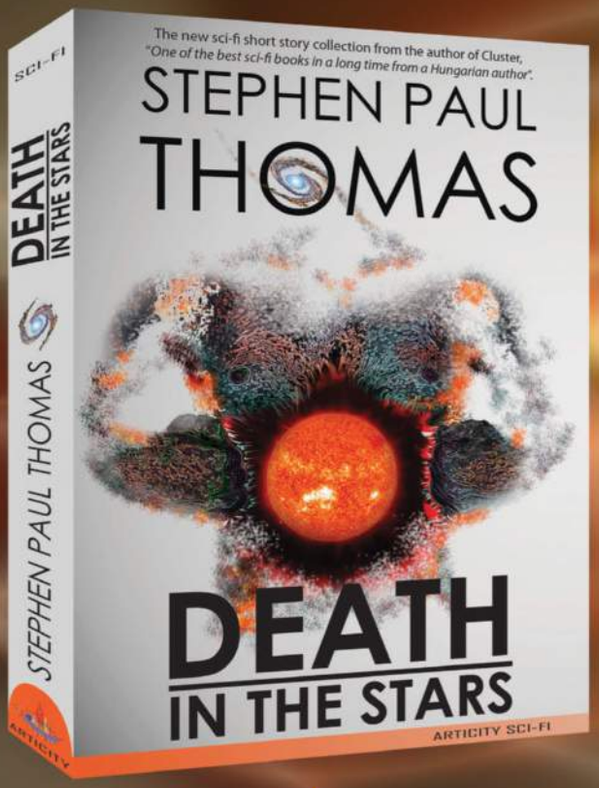


Rebecca Richards

7 SciFiNow scored **7** for Six Of Crows: A Grisha Novel
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE



IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...
California Bones
Greg van Eekhout
A ragtag crew pull off a heist in a magical world vein, albeit with a quicker pace.



Why would we want to live longer than the stars? Even they stop shining one day.

"Stephen Paul Thomas tells these stories in varied and compelling ways, and there are flashes of enigmatic answers. There's crime, adventure, even a juridical trial in his writings, both scientific and fantastic in turn. The result is a wildly entertaining book that grips you by the collar and won't let go."

Death is taboo. Death is incomprehensible, inexplicable; and, yet, inevitable.

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SPIDER-MAN REBOOTED

Amazing Spider-Man writer Dan Slott on the changes for the character, the joys of Silver Surfer and going crazy on the Doctor Who set

WORDS **CHRIS ANDERSON**

WE THINK OF SPIDER-MAN AS A HERO WHO HAS SEEN SOME TOUGH TIMES. FIRST HE LOST HIS UNCLE BEN, NEXT IT WAS GWEN STACY, and then there's the general hatred of him encouraged by a certain newspaper publisher. In the last two decades alone, he's endured the infamous Clone Saga, discovered that Gwen Stacy had secret children with his arch-nemesis, had his marriage to Mary Jane Watson dissolved in a deal with Mephisto, and then swapped bodies with Doctor Octopus. 'Nuff said.

In October, his core comic-book title, *Amazing Spider-Man*, is being relaunched, starting again with issue #1. Every Marvel comic that month is getting the same treatment in the wake of the *Secret Wars*. The various characters will move on to the *All-New, All-Different* Marvel era, as this wave of relaunched titles is being called.

So what does that mean for Spider-Man? Dan Slott, the writer who has been with the character since 2008, knows the answer. It was Slott that penned outrageous stories like *Spider-Island*, where multiple characters got Spider powers, and *Spider-Verse*, with alternate versions of Spider-Man from other realities coming together to fight a mutual threat. And yes, it was Slott's idea to have Spidey and Doc Ock switch bodies, resulting in the temporary *Superior Spider-Man* title, crazed internet backlash and massive sales. If the brief is 'all-new, all-different', that is sure to mean something special in Slott's eyes.

Slott's previous storylines include *Superior Spider-Man*, in which Peter Parker and Dr Octopus swapped bodies.







We've been told that this is a new Marvel universe. What does that mean for the old continuity?

You're going to have to wait and see. One thing I can tell you is your comics count. All those long boxes you have count… well, let me rephrase that: all the books in your long boxes that I wrote count [laughs]. I want to pick a person's name at random and say, "Ha ha, theirs doesn't," but I'm not that big of a jerk [laughs].

How does the new #1 begin?

There's been an eight-month gap from when the dust settles after *Secret Wars* to the *All-New, All-Different* Marvel comics. And in that eight-month period, Peter

All images © Marvel Entertainment

Parker's company, Parker Industries, has taken off. Whoosh! It's taken over the world, and is now one of the pre-eminent companies of the Marvel universe, like Rand or Roxxon.

Or Stark?
Whoa! Hold your horses about Stark. But Parker Industries is a success, and that's weird. Because everything we know about Peter Parker; he's the guy who has a hard time making rent, he's the guy eating day-old pizza and checking the couch cushions for extra change for his date. So this is a whole new world for him, and that's the fun of it. It's not, "Oh my god, you're doing Peter Parker completely wrong!" It's, "Well, what if you took the Peter Parker we all know and love, put him in a suit and shoved him into that world? What happens next?"

It's the world we've wanted for him...
It's likes you're saying, this thing you always wished for would happen, well now it's happening. That must surely lead to interesting stories [laughs].

And it's on an international scale? You're taking him out of New York?
New York is such a pivotal character in the world of Spider-Man, so this is another way to knock him off his pins and put him in an uncomfortable spot. We have seen stories for 50 years where Peter and Marvel characters have teamed up and gone around the world, but when you get to the root of it, Spider-Man is hard-wired into New York, and suddenly he's spending more time in Shanghai, San Francisco and London, and yes, every now and then he will touch base with the Parker Industries branch in Manhattan. So we still get Peter in New York, but this is about taking him to a whole new global arena.

He's got a new suit too...
It's funny, because when I started writing *Spider-Man*, we had a story arc called 'Big Time', which was about Peter finally getting resources, and he went a little crazy at first, building a zillion suits. There was the Big Time suit, the bulletproof suit, the Future Foundation suit... This is more about him using his skills and new-found status to make the best suit.

There's a glowing spider on the front. Does he have a lot of gadgets now?
You'll have to wait and see.

And the Spider-Mobile is presumably an improvement on the old one?
Oh yeah. The original Spider-Mobile is from a classic Seventies storyline. A car company asks Spider-Man to help them promote this non-polluting engine, to be fitted to a vehicle of his choosing, and he agrees because he needs the money. He lives in New York, he's never driven before, and he asks the Human Torch to help him build this thing. It's a monstrosity – this horrible dune buggy. And the second he gets a chance to drive it, he takes it right into the East River. People have fond memories of just how terrible the Spider-Mobile was, and I'm one of them. So I thought, "Well okay, what if you made a cool one?" It's neat.

It looks like Alex Ross designed the new suit, while Giuseppe Camuncoli took care of the Spider-Mobile.
Yeah, we contacted Alex and told him about the new take on Spider-Man, and some of the things the suit could do and the direction we were going, and he did a couple of designs, and we picked the one we liked. And Giuseppe, the artist on these stories, is doing great work as always.

There are other *Spider* titles launching. How do they fit together?
There's the *Spider-Man* toy box, with all the villains and supporting cast, and it's going to be open for Miles [Morales], Jessica [Spider-Woman], Silk and Miguel O'Hara [Spider-Man 2099] to play with. You've got all of these different Spiders running around New York, and each book has its own different feel.

Do you think you'll have the same reaction with this relaunch as you did for *Superior Spider-Man*? Didn't you get death threats?



As well as *Spider-Man*, Slott has been writing *Silver Surfer* for Marvel, with help from artist Mike Allred.



Spidey's new costume is designed by Alex Ross – a familiar look that hints at new abilities.

"PETER PARKER'S COMPANY, PARKER INDUSTRIES, HAS TAKEN OFF. IT'S TAKEN OVER THE WORLD"
DAN SLOTT

You have to keep shaking it up to make it fresh and exciting. But *Superior* was definitely the craziest fan reaction I've seen to a storyline, making Peter and Doc Ock switch bodies. At one point, [veteran writer] Gerry Conway reached out to me, as he could see the avalanche coming my way. He said to me, "Here's the deal. Do you know what makes you different to any other *Spider-Man* writer that's been on the book? You're the *Spider-Man* writer in the age of social media. I can't even begin to think what would have happened if I killed Gwen Stacy when there was Twitter."

Readers really warmed to the Octavius Spider-Man after a while. Do you have plans to bring him back?
There's a seed that has been sown, so you'll have to wait and see. Go back and read *Spider-Verse*, and you might spot it. Also, remember in *Superior Spider-Man*, Carlie Cooper went to the grave of Otto Octavius, and it was... empty!

The movie rights to *Spider-Man* are back with Marvel thanks to the Sony deal. Anything you can tell us?
What? I'm a comic-book guy! They don't tell me anything [laughs]. But I will say, did you see, when the news was breaking that they had cast Tom Holland, the Instagram footage he posted doing the parkour? The minute I saw that, it's like the coolest thing. You could have him as Peter Parker, and then the same actor doing all that stuff in the costume. They haven't really done that before. And the thing to keep in mind, this is Marvel Studios. *Captain America: Winter Soldier*! *Guardians of the Galaxy*! *Ant-Man*! And now *Spider-Man?* You're going to see him with the Marvel Studios magic behind him, so you should be excited.

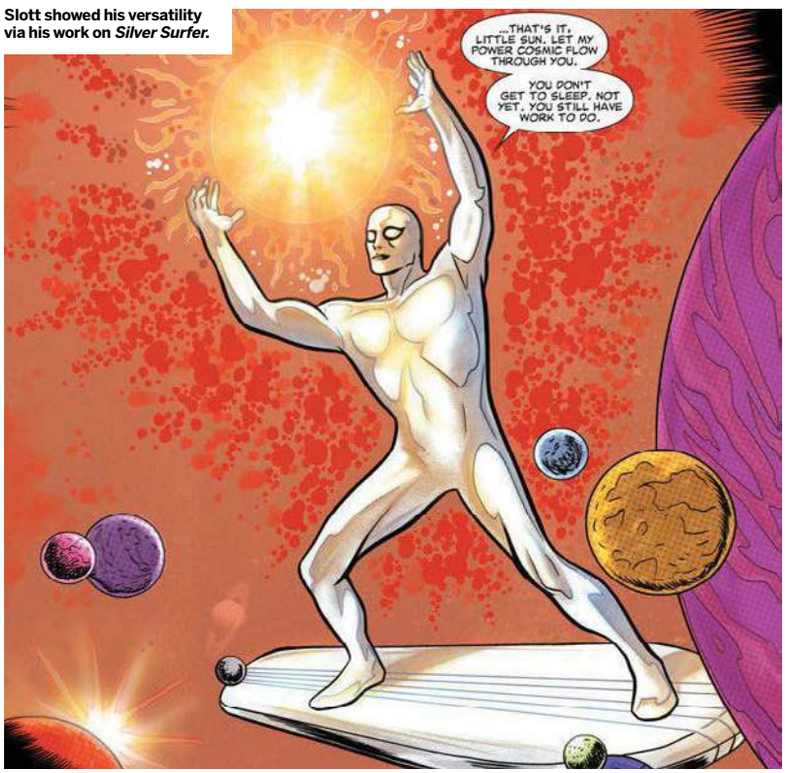
Before *Secret Wars* happened, you were also writing *Silver Surfer*...
I was, working with [artist] Mike Allred – we had a blast on that book. Mike is one of the most positive people I've ever worked with, and receptive to any weird idea; the weirder the better.

You're a huge *Doctor Who* fan. Was that an influence at all, because *Silver Surfer* is more sci-fi?
There is some *Doctor Who* in there. We gave him a female companion, and she is clearly a 'new *Who*' character – it's like, this is the Russell T Davies reboot version of *Silver Surfer*. I grew up in the UK, I watched a lot of sci-fi, so there's influences from *Hitchhiker's Guide* and *Red Dwarf*. And at the same time we're staying true to Marvel, and remembering that this isn't just cosmic space; it's [Jack] Kirby cosmic space. Honestly, *Silver Surfer* is so much fun.

Do you get to meet a lot of the *Doctor Who* cast at conventions?
I have used my 'I write *Spider-Man*' status to meet as many people from *Doctor Who* as I can. I've just been at a convention in London, and afterwards we went to the studios in Cardiff where the ninth series is being filmed. Such lovely people that work there, they let me, Tom Brevoort [Marvel's senior vice president of publishing], his wife and my best friend run around the TARDIS set, pulling switches and pushing buttons. I saw some stuff that's coming up in the next season, and I'm super-excited. I didn't get to meet Peter Capaldi, though.

Would you ever like to write a *Doctor Who* comic?
I'm under Marvel exclusive, and as much as I love that and have health insurance and all the benefits, the only downside is that I can't write a *Doctor Who* comic [at a rival publisher]. I could write it in a different medium that's not comics... he said out loud [laughs]. Maybe audio drama or a novelisation, I could easily do that... he said, throwing it out there [laughs]. But I have *Spider-Man* and *Surfer*, so I'm pretty happy with that.

Amazing Spider-Man #1 goes on sale in October. More info can be found at **www.marvel.com.**



Slott showed his versatility via his work on *Silver Surfer*.

The new Spider-verse
More Spider titles launching in October


Spider-Man
Follow Miles Morales as he adjusts to life in the Marvel universe – he'll be a member of the *All-New, All-Different Avengers*.


Spider-Man 2099
The Spider-Man of the future, Miguel O'Hara, has a new suit! He'll be fighting crime in both 2015 and 2099.


Spider-Woman
The first pregnant superhero? Jessica Drew starts her adventures eight months after *Secret Wars*.


Carnage
The symbiote-spawn villain is getting his own series – with a little help from writer Gerry Conway.


Venom: Spaceknight
Before *Secret Wars*, Venom was appearing in *Guardians Of The Galaxy*. It looks like he'll be staying in space for a while.


Spider-Man/ Deadpool
Writer Joe Kelly describes this team-up book as "your favourite buddy-cop movie on steroids, written by a swill-minded teenager".


Web Warriors
The Spider-Men from other realities have come together – including Spider-Gwen, Spider-Ham, Spider-Man Noir and Spider-Man India.

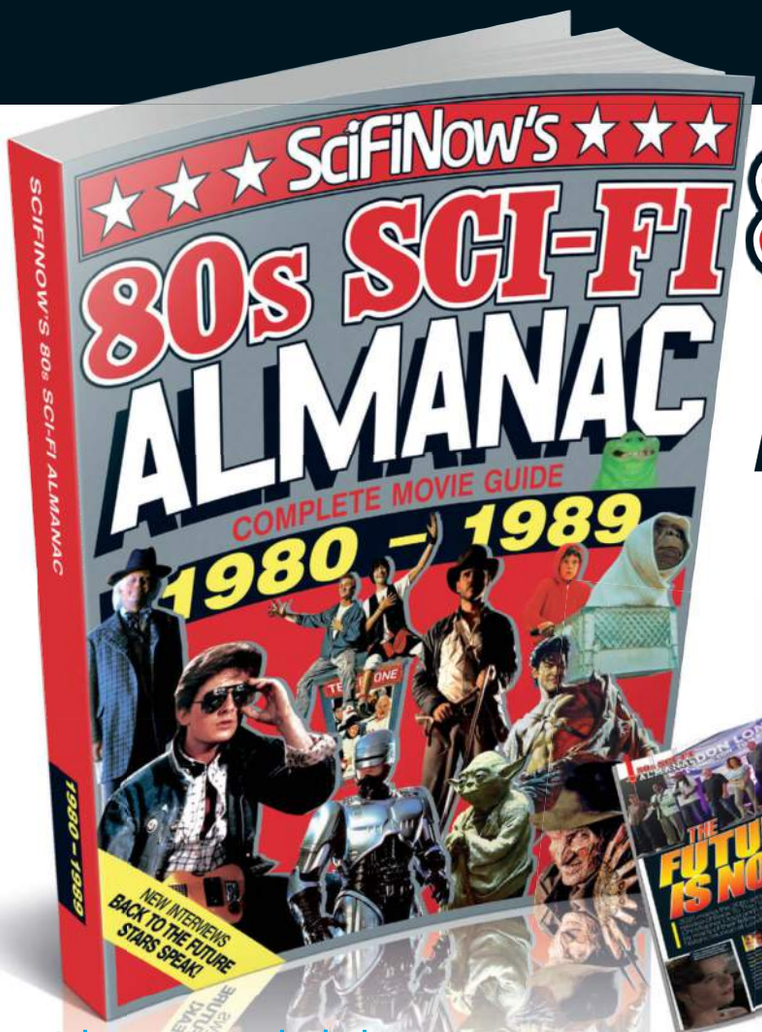

Spider-Gwen
The Gwen Stacy from an alternate reality, bitten by the spider instead of Peter Parker, returns as her world's Spider-Woman.


Silk
After the spider bit Peter, it also managed to bite Cindy Moon – who became Silk. Slott, who created her, warns that she'll be on a dark path.


Spidey
New stories set in Peter Parker's youth, back in high school. Watch him as he learns to be a crime-fighter.


With Parker Industries a success, Spider-Man will spend his time around the world.

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80s SCI-FI ALMANAC

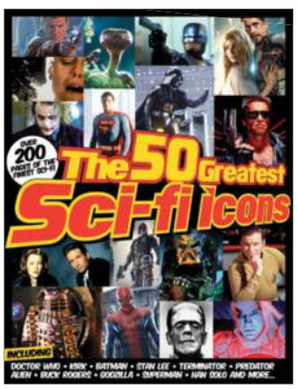
Celebrate 30 years of *Back To The Future* with the cast as they talk about what it's like to be a part of legendary film. Cast your mind back over the instant classics and remember *Star Wars* in the run up to the release of *The Force Awakens*.



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AN IMAGINE MONTHLY


SPIDER-MAN
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BENDIS
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THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO MARVEL ULTIMATE COMICS

15 YEARS AGO, MARVEL'S ULTIMATE IMPRINT BECAME AN INSTANT BESTSELLER. FOLLOWING ITS RECENT CANCELLATION, HOW WILL IT BE REMEMBERED?

WORDS **CHRIS ANDERSON**

At the turn of the century, things were not looking good for Marvel Comics. It had filed for bankruptcy in 1996, and was struggling much like the rest of the industry. Following years of incredible sales, for which Marvel still holds the record for the biggest-selling comic-book of all time – with stores ordering 8.1 million copies of *X-Men* #1 just years earlier in 1991 – there had been a dramatic downturn, and people were no longer buying.

This spectacular rise and fall can be attributed to several factors. Like other companies, Marvel could be accused of printing too many variants of different titles, over-saturating the market to entice speculators hoping they would rocket in value, as was the expectation of the time. A reliance on shock-tactic storylines – such as DC's 'The Death Of Superman' – also fuelled sales, but fans felt less enthused when the status quo was inevitably restored. Interest in comics waned, and specialist dealers were going out of business.

Marvel also made some misjudged attempts at reinvention, most notably 'Heroes Reborn', in which it outsourced a reboot of its *Avengers* and *Fantastic Four* characters to Image Comics – poorly received by fans and alienating its own staff, who felt betrayed by such a move. "There was a lot of resentment," explained Joe Quesada on Kevin Smith's *Fatman On Batman* podcast, about joining Marvel at that time. "But it's understandable, if you're working on *Fantastic Four*, and someone comes up and says, 'We're giving this to those guys that left us and started another company, sorry,' you're not going to be too happy about that."

Quesada had been brought in as an editor in the wake of the bankruptcy to help revitalise the company, initially focusing on Daredevil, the Punisher and the Inhumans for the line that became Marvel Knights, launching in 1998. The idea was to produce tighter, edgier stories, with an emphasis on writing and art rather than variants or gimmicks.

It proved to be a success, and by 2000 Quesada had been promoted to editor-in-chief, with the task of raising standards across the board. Helping him would be Bill Jemas, appointed that same year as Marvel's president of consumer products, publishing and new media. The two became the face of a regeneration plan for the company – a double-act that would announce ideas and launches at conventions. These included additional imprints, such as MAX or Tsunami, with each looking to attract a different demographic.

While they were enough to help Marvel continue, it still lacked a major hit to push it into the clear. "I remember speaking to Gareb Shamus, the founder of *Wizard* magazine, about what was wrong with Marvel Comics," recalls Jemas. "Part of it was that

"WE WANTED TO MAINTAIN THE ESSENCE, BUT ADJUST THE METAPHORS"

BILL JEMAS

characters who were initially conceived as teenagers back in 1962 were now married with kids. They didn't resonate with a younger audience anymore. It was the same when I talked to people at Marvel – everyone thought Spider-Man should be a kid again."

At any other point, a company-wide reboot may have been an option, but as Quesada explained to *Comic Book Resources* back in 2008, this was a dangerous climate: "You have to understand that when Bill took over Marvel at this time, the industry was in the crapper, and anything you did could literally be the last thing you did. While it was nerve-wracking, it was also pretty liberating, as we had nothing to lose."

The decision to launch another imprint was reached, rather than reboot the entire line. There were also other influences coming into play – the original *X-Men* movie had been released in 2000, and performed well, showing that there was still interest in superheroes. However, this was not reflected in comic-book sales. With multiple timelines, titles, crossovers and versions of characters, it proved difficult for anyone impressed by the film to find something to read. There was also a *Spider-Man* movie in the works, and the comics there had similar problems.

It made sense for the imprint to start with these characters, presenting something a movie audience could pick up easily, and at the same time deliver a modern, updated feel that appealed to a younger generation. "There were two key parts to the brief," Jemas explains. "The first was adaptation – we wanted to maintain the essence of the characters and the core plot dynamics, but freely adjust the metaphors to make the most sense to modern audiences. The next change was storytelling, as we wanted to shift from a soap opera to a feature-film style, with each six-issue story arc having a beginning and an end. And instead of starting the stories with a splash, we'd build up from relatable activities to enormous action scenes."

Neither remembers how the 'Ultimate' name came about, but they do recall the difficulties in finding the right creators. Apparently, the two considered many treatments for *Ultimate Spider-Man* before settling on Brian Michael Bendis. "Brian took the idea of Peter Parker as the skinny nerd with horn-rimmed glasses – which is what the nerdy kid was like in that [Sixties] era – and he looked at today's modern world," Quesada told *Comic Book Resources*. "Peter dropped all those trappings and became more of a very brooding kid. He had an intensity to him – he'd either be a nerd, or the guy who shows up at the high school the next day in a trench coat and blows everybody away. That was the shift that was needed. It wasn't about computers, microscopes or cell phones. It was about an emotional difference between what a kid is today and what he would have been in the Sixties."

Talking of his experiences writing the first Ultimate comic, Bendis echoes the concerns that surrounded the industry. "When I got hired, I literally thought I was going to be writing one of the last – if not *the* last – Marvel comic," he said in an interview with *Vulture*. "It's so the opposite now, that people don't even know."

He was teamed with artist Mark Bagley, and they launched *Ultimate Spider-Man* in 2000. It was the first part of a much longer origin story, with a slower pace to allow for more investment in the characters, so that when Uncle Ben is shot or Peter Parker, still enrolled in high school, first dons the costume a few issues in, it had a bigger emotional effect. There were the aesthetic touches too, making the spider genetically enhanced rather than radioactive, with Peter a part-time web designer at the *Daily Bugle* instead of a photographer.

The marketing drive around the book was also a departure. Around 800,000 copies were given out for free through supermarkets, toy stores and even shoe companies. The idea was to connect with the youth market once again, not only through comics, but the collected volumes appearing in book stores that the Ultimate story arcs suited so well, creating another lucrative outlet for Marvel. To this day, collected volumes of *Ultimate Spider-Man* remain among its top sellers.

A similar publicity drive surrounded *Ultimate X-Men* #1, printed in February 2001, with its second issue distributed free with the *New York Post*. Quesada and Jemas asked Mark Millar to write the book, which was intended to be closer to the film than the regular Marvel comics. "They told me to go see the movie and write a proposal," Millar recalled to *Sequential Art*.

Like Bendis, Millar wanted his stories to have more emotional impact. "I'm not really interested in the whole 'whose ass will they kick next?' kind of stories that have permeated superhero comics since the Sixties," he said at the time. "I'd prefer to see conflict arise from situations as opposed to some guy just showing up and fighting the team because he's a villain. Something



10 BIG ULTIMATE CHANGES How the Ultimate universe



1. PETER PARKER DIED

What could have been a gimmick turned out to be a masterstroke, and introduced Miles Morales as a new mixed-race Spider-Man.



2. REED RICHARDS TURNED EVIL

A hero right up until the 'Ultimatum' event, something in Richards snapped and he became more like his former arch-nemesis, Doctor Doom.



3. HUMANS CREATED MUTANTS

Rather than being the next stage of human evolution, in the Ultimates, mutants were made as a side effect of Super Soldier programme.



4. GWEN STACY WAS CARNAGE

A streetwise Gwen Stacy was introduced in *Ultimate Spider-Man* and died there too, only to return as the host of the symbiote Carnage.



5. CABLE WAS WOLVERINE

Like the regular Cable, the Ultimate version travelled back in time from the future – but is actually Wolverine, rather than a descendent of Cyclops.



Ultimate Comics X **followed Wolverine's son Jimmy through high school.**





differed from regular Marvel continuity



6. CAP BECAME PRESIDENT…

After Reed Richards killed President Obama, Cap was sworn in as the country's new leader – the first in its history to wear a mask.



7. …AND THE RED SKULL WAS HIS SON

The Red Skull was conceived before Cap was frozen in ice at the end of WWII. He even cut off his own face so as not to look like his dad.



8. NICK FURY WAS SAMUEL L JACKSON

The comics had the idea first – the Sixties Nick Fury is said to be based on Dean Martin, but in 2002 Jackson was the coolest guy around.



9. GREEN GOBLIN WAS LITERALLY A GOBLIN

Dressing up like a gnome wasn't scary enough – but transforming into a deranged Hulk-like creature was.



10. YOUR FAVOURITE PROBABLY DIED

Wolverine and Professor X died during 'Ultimatum', with more perishing in 'Cataclysm'. And there was also Peter Parker…

COMPLET
MARVEL ULTIMATE

going wrong, or a character having a nervous breakdown and hiding it from the rest of the team, or whatever, is infinitely more interesting to me than someone just appearing and trying to rob a bank."

The *Ultimate X-Men* team featured youthful versions of Cyclops, Beast and Jean Grey, all looking similar to their movie counterparts, with the initial story arc concerning a young Wolverine – initially a double agent working for Magneto – arriving at Xavier's school. Like *Ultimate Spider-Man*, there were familiar beats and subtle twists, and both titles' sales eventually eclipsed the titles they were partly influenced by.

The Ultimate titles were generating a real sense of excitement, with readers genuinely intrigued when an 'Ultimate' version of a hero or villain was to be introduced. But perhaps the first real test of the imprint lay in expanding it. There had been miniseries like *Ultimate Team-Up* and *Ultimate Adventures*, but what would be the next ongoing books? For those, Jemas and Quesada once again turned to Millar, who launched *The Ultimates* in March 2002. "This is the movie version of the *Avengers*, and you'd never get a movie of the Marvel heroes called *The Avengers*," said Millar at the time. How impossible the idea must have seemed back then.

With art by Bryan Hitch, who Millar had paired with on *The Authority,* there are many notable similarities between *The Ultimates* and Joss Whedon's first *Avengers* movie. The heroes are brought together by SHIELD to fight an alien invasion, and even have a Nick Fury who looks like Samuel L Jackson. In Whedon's case, it actually was Jackson who was cast, but for Millar ten years earlier, he felt it was the actor who ought to play Nick Fury in a movie. "It made sense to me that the new commander in chief of SHIELD might be a black guy from a purely practical point of view," Millar explained. "Everyone told me I was crazy because [the original] Nick was so immersed in that Rat Pack cool, but I couldn't see a 14-year-old responding to that in 2002. Nick was always too cool for school, and Samuel L Jackson just seemed the perfect choice."

Ultimate Fantastic Four, also by Millar and released in 2004, had similar influences on the movie versions that followed, with both the first take on the franchise and its reboot linking Doctor Doom's origin to the rest of the team's. Josh Trank's flawed 2015 instalment is actually the most faithful adaptation of the *Ultimate Fantastic Four*, introducing Reed Richards as a child genius and the notion of interdimensional travel.

By 2008, Marvel's difficult years were over, and the comic-book industry in general had strengthened, thanks in part to the many movies based on its various characters. The Ultimate imprint, and *The Ultimates* in particular, had shown Marvel the potential for getting these characters onto the big screen itself, which led to the formation of Marvel Studios.



Nothing was sacred: Reed Richards turned evil, and even Captain America perished (right).





The line continued with its four core titles and several miniseries, but was beginning to run into problems that worked against the reasons it was created in the first place. It was meant to be light on continuity, but now had its own; its style of storytelling and depiction of characters was so successful that it had influenced the core Marvel titles, so the two were not as easy to distinguish. And with all of the superhero films being announced, the Ultimate take on the characters in the comics, which were themselves meant to be like movie versions, no longer seemed exciting.

If the Ultimate line had at one time saved Marvel Comics, it now needed revitalising itself, and the answer came in the form of a major shake-up – killing off a large number of characters in the storyline known as 'Ultimatum'. "While I can't say on the record why some of these deaths are happening, some are to help us get back to the original mission statement of the Ultimate universe – to make these characters younger," explained Quesada to *Comic Book Resources* in 2008. "The deaths will definitely shift things around, paving the way for a lot of different books."

Unfortunately, 'Ultimatum' was a critical disaster, abhorred by fans. Written by Jeph Loeb, with art by





THE JACKSON REACTION

Samuel L Jackson's take on being Nick Fury

So what did Samuel L Jackson think when he discovered his likeness was being used for the new Nick Fury in *The Ultimates*? In a 2012 interview with the *LA Times*, the actor said he picked up the comic and called Marvel to find out what was going on. He told the newspaper, "They were kind of like, 'Yeah, we are planning on making movies, and we do hope you'll be part of them.'"

Mark Millar also got to meet his inspiration on the set of *Kingsman: The Secret Service* a couple of years ago, which was based on Millar's own creations. According to *Business Insider*, he said, "I hope you don't mind me completely exploiting your appearance in my book 13 years back," to which Jackson replied, "Hell no, man, thanks for the nine-picture deal."



The Ultimate line even saw the introduction of a new Spider-Man: Miles Morales.



Galactus crossed over from the regular Marvel universe in 'Cataclysm'.

"KIDS OF COLOUR WOULDN'T BE SUPERMAN… THEY CAN BE SPIDER-MAN THOUGH"

BRIAN MICHAEL BENDIS

David Finch, the story saw Magneto upping his war on mankind by sending a colossal tidal wave to flood New York. Many Ultimate heroes were simply wiped out, often in a ridiculous fashion – the scene of the Blob eating the Wasp and announcing she tastes like chicken, only to have his own head bitten off by Giant Man in revenge, is one of the most criticised.

While it did lead to a wave of relaunched titles, including *Spider-Man*, *New Ultimates*, an *Ultimate Avengers* title and *Ultimate Comics X*, which focused on Wolverine's illegitimate son, 'Ultimatum' had affected readers' loyalty, and it would not be until 2011 that a much-needed shot of credibility would arrive. Brian Michael Bendis did the unthinkable and killed Peter Parker, with the Spider-Man mantle passed to a much younger teen of mixed race, Miles Morales. "This is a Spider-Man for the 21st century, who's reflective of our culture and diversity," said Axel Alonso, who replaced Joe Quesada as editor-in-chief that same year.

The character was a huge success, with Spider-Man the ideal choice for the company to highlight diversity. "It was about analysing what it means to be Spider-Man, and what it means in this world, versus the world that Spider-Man was originally created in – even the world *Ultimate Spider-Man* was created in was different," Bendis told the *New York Daily News*. "Many kids of colour play superheroes with their friends, but they wouldn't be Batman or Superman because they don't look like them. They can be Spider-Man though, because it could be anyone under that mask."

The arrival of Miles and subsequent media attention offered the chance to relaunch the rest of the line, with a new *Ultimates* and *X-Men* title. It was *Spider-Man*, however, that remained the high point, with Bendis writing the *Spider-Men* miniseries in 2012, where the Peter Parker of the regular Marvel universe crossed over into the Ultimate world, meeting Miles Morales for the first time. More than a gimmick, the story featured all of the emotional trademarks Bendis is known for,



Morales' story will continue in the relaunched Marvel comics.



with an adult Peter Parker in a world where he had died as a teen, exploring the repercussions of him meeting his still-mourning supporting cast.

But arguably, *Spider-Men* raised as many questions for the Ultimate universe as it did its own acclaim. The most important being, was it still relevant? In the past, a team-up between characters from the two universes would have been impossible, but this showed how similar they had both become, making the transition almost seamless. And a Samuel L Jackson lookalike Nick Fury had been introduced in the regular Marvel books, so what else was there to set this universe apart?

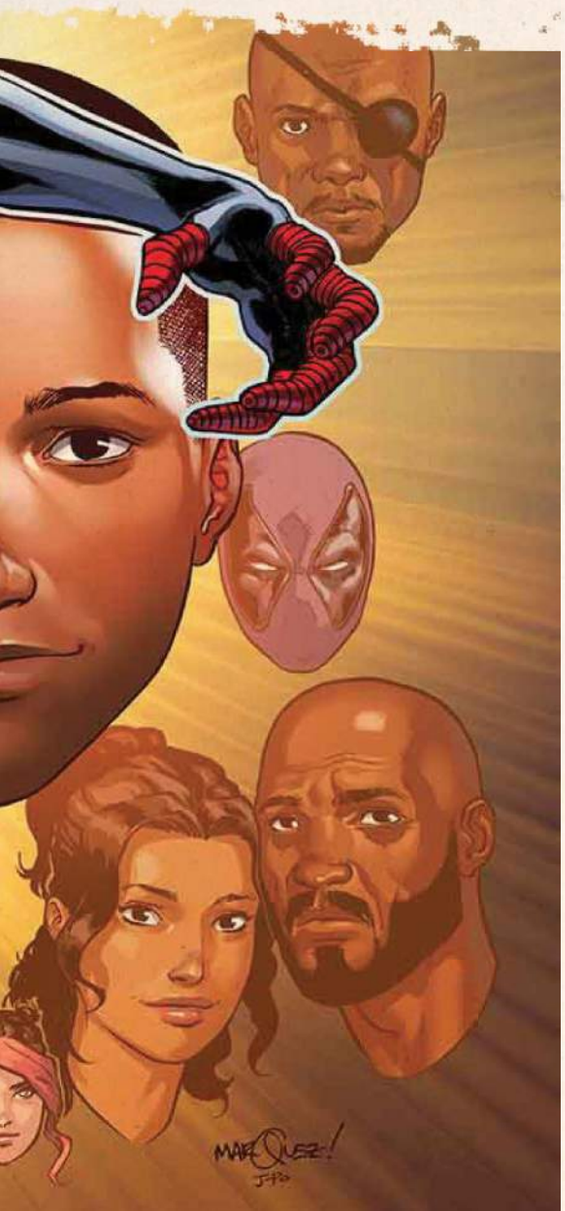
To find out, one last shake-up was attempted – 'Cataclysm', a miniseries where Galactus crossed into the Ultimate universe and attempted to devour it, resulting in further shocks and casualties. This was followed by yet another line-wide reboot, with new titles *Miles Morales: Ultimate Spider-Man*, *Ultimate FF* and *All-New Ultimates* hitting stores in April 2014.

But they would each last for less than a year, cancelled in January 2015 as a new plan got underway. "The Marvel universe and the Ultimate universe are going to smash together," revealed Axel Alonso in January, announcing the *Ultimate End* and *Secret Wars* miniseries. "The pieces left will come together and create a single All-New, All-Different Marvel universe."

The main element of the Ultimate universe that will survive is, of course, Miles Morales, starring in a comic called, simply, *Spider-Man*, and he will also be appearing in a new Avengers title. Another team book, *All-New, All-Different Ultimates* is launching, but it remains to be seen if it relates to the Ultimate universe in anything other than name.

It may have been Joe Quesada and Bill Jemas that were the original driving force behind getting the Ultimate titles off the ground, but with the torch passed to Axel Alonso some time ago, it is the task of the current editor-in-chief to highlight the imprint's legacy. "The Ultimate universe allowed us to do fresh takes on iconic comic-book characters, to bend them like taffy for a new generation of readers," he told *Comic Book Resources*. "The fact that the series not only won over the sceptics, but brought in new fans, definitely emboldened us to take create chances within the Marvel universe to up its game. That's the legacy of the Ultimate universe."

You can buy the various Ultimate comics at **comixology.com**. More info can be found at **www.marvel.com**.





The idea for *The Ultimates* was a movie version of the Avengers.



The 'Ultimatum' storyline wiped out numerous characters – some in controversial fashion.

It remains to be seen how much of the Ultimate imprint will survive post-*Secret Wars*.





ALL-STAR HEROES

Was it DC's answer to the Ultimate line?

DC Comics launched its own separate universe in 2005, dubbed All-Star Comics, which drew obvious comparisons with Marvel's Ultimate series. It presented new takes on established characters, was separate from regular DC continuity, and launched when both *Batman Begins* and *Superman Returns* were due in cinemas – hence its two titles, *All-Star Superman* by Grant Morrison and Frank Quitely, and *All-Star Batman & Robin, The Boy Wonder* by Frank Miller and Jim Lee. Morrison's take on Superman ran for 12 issues and was praised for being one of the definitive takes on the character, a love letter to his long history. Miller and Lee's Batman, however, with its retelling of Dick Grayson's origin, was heavily criticised for its poor characterisation and dialogue – with its last issue released in 2008 and the remaining six still yet to be published. *All-Star Wonder Woman* and *All-Star Batgirl* were also announced, but never came to be.

FROM THE KNIGHTS WHO SAY NI TO THE HOLY HAND GRENADE OF ANTIOCH, MONTY PYTHON AND THE HOLY GRAIL PACKS MORE LAUGHS INTO ITS 91 MINUTES THAN ANY OTHER FILM. THAT'S A FACT. ASK A HISTORIAN. TO CAMELOT!

WORDS JONATHAN HATFULL

TimeWarp Retro Classic Film

MONTY PYTHON & THE HOLY GRAIL



Film

RUNNING TIME: 91 minutes
RELEASE DATE: 23 May 1975
DIRECTORS: Terry Gilliam, Terry Jones
WRITERS: Graham Chapman, John Cleese, Terry Gilliam, Eric Idle, Terry Jones, Michael Palin
CAST: Graham Chapman, John Cleese, Terry Gilliam, Eric Idle, Terry Jones, Michael Palin, Connie Booth, Carol Cleveland, Neil Innes

About

King Arthur (Graham Chapman) sets out to find a group of knights worthy of joining him: Sir Bedevere (Terry Jones), Sir Lancelot (John Cleese), Sir Galahad (Michael Palin) and Sir Robin (Eric Idle). After they decide not to go to Camelot, they are given a quest by God to find the Holy Grail. This will be a lot more complicated than it sounds, however, as they have to contend with rude French knights, a killer rabbit, a three-headed giant, a castle full of beautiful seductresses, and, of course, the Legendary Black Beast of Castle Aaargh. Oh, and it's very, very, very silly.

It could be argued that *The Life Of Brian* is a better film than *Holy Grail*. It's more daring, it's more technically accomplished, it's saying something – kind of – and it did lead to the nearly unwatchable debate between the Pythons (represented by John Cleese and Michael Palin) and the Church (represented by Malcolm Muggeridge and Bishop Mervyn Stockwood). But *The Holy Grail* is superior in one very important aspect: it's just funnier. It's gut-bustingly hilarious. It's a film that references Ingmar Bergman while launching cows from a catapult.

The gags come so thick and fast that no matter how many times you've seen it, something will surprise you and cause a torrent of giggles. Take the opening credits. There's a statement signed by Richard Nixon before Swedish subtitles appear and the whole thing gets out of control, and we're told that the person responsible for the subtitles has been sacked. Then we're told that the person responsible for sacking the person responsible has been sacked. Oh, and then there's the bright and cheerful sequence with cheesy music that credits executive producers John Goldstone & 'Ralph' The Wonder Llama. Oh, and of course, the film is directed by 40 Specially Trained Ecuadorian Mountain Llamas, 6 Venezuelan Red Llamas, 142 Mexican Whooping Llamas, 14 Chilean Guanacos (Closely Related To The Llama), Reg Llama Of Brixton, 760000 Battery Llamas from 'Llama-Fresh Farms, LTD', Near Paraguay and Terry Gilliam & Terry Jones. This is before there's any footage.

The Pythons' first foray into filmmaking feels like a continuation of their television work, essentially functioning as a series of consistently brilliant sketches. Arthur has a series of frustrating conversations with people who want to belittle him or nitpick before he finds Sir Bedevere (Terry Jones). The arrival of the other knights is recapped in book form, and they split up after encountering Cleese's fantastically difficult Frenchman, at which point each knight has his own battle. Eric Idle's Sir Robin runs away from a three-headed knight, Bedevere and Arthur must procure a shrubbery for the Knights Who Say Ni, Palin's Sir Galahad finds shelter in a castle full of alluring ladies, and Cleese's Sir Lancelot slaughters his way through a wedding party. They finally regroup to attack the Killer Rabbit Of Caerbannog, survive the Black Beast Of Aaaaaargh, cross the Bridge Of Death and face their final challenge.


None of these men were turned into newts.

What is perhaps most striking about the film on rewatching it is how quickly it moves. None of these sequences outstay their welcome; it's all over before you know what hit you. It's also impressive how cinematic it is, which was one of the largest sources of tension on the film. Jones and Gilliam, desperate to make the most of their first time directing a proper film, were inspired by the grit and grimness of Pasolini and Bergman, but their perfectionism irritated the rest of the team, who were more concerned with whether it was funny.

No one really had the best time on the *Holy Grail* shoot. Indeed, if you were looking for omens of a film's failure, they wouldn't exactly have been in short supply. First of all, nobody wanted to give them any money to make it, so the team had the brilliant idea of going to famous rock musicians of the time who were on the lookout for ways to get around the punishing tax rates of the era. Artists like Elton John, Pink Floyd and Led Zeppelin ended up putting in about $10,000 each.



The first of many wounds for the Black Knight.





Tim the Enchanterer. Not a manky Scots git.



Sir Lancelot, making a tough decision about his squire.

CLASSIC QUOTES

"'TIS BUT A SCRATCH!"
THE BLACK KNIGHT

"ON SECOND THOUGHT, LET'S NOT GO TO CAMELOT. IT IS A SILLY PLACE"
KING ARTHUR

"I DON'T WANT TO TALK TO YOU NO MORE, YOU EMPTY-HEADED ANIMAL FOOD TROUGH WIPER! I FART IN YOUR GENERAL DIRECTION! YOUR MOTHER WAS A HAMSTER AND YOUR FATHER SMELT OF ELDERBERRIES!"
FRENCH KNIGHT

"LISTEN, STRANGE WOMEN LYIN' IN PONDS DISTRIBUTIN' SWORDS IS NO BASIS FOR A SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT. SUPREME EXECUTIVE POWER DERIVES FROM A MANDATE FROM THE MASSES, NOT FROM SOME FARCICAL AQUATIC CEREMONY"
DENNIS

"LOOK, THAT RABBIT'S GOT A VICIOUS STREAK A MILE WIDE! IT'S A KILLER!"
TIM

"THERE ARE SOME WHO CALL ME... TIM"
TIM

"...YOU MUST CUT DOWN THE MIGHTIEST TREE IN THE FOREST... WITH... A HERRING!"
KNIGHT WHO SAYS NI

"AND AS THE BLACK BEAST LURCHED FORWARD, ESCAPE FOR ARTHUR AND HIS KNIGHTS SEEMED HOPELESS, WHEN SUDDENLY, THE ANIMATOR SUFFERED A FATAL HEART ATTACK!"
NARRATOR

"LOOK, YOU STUPID BASTARD, YOU'VE GOT NO ARMS LEFT!"
KING ARTHUR

"GET ON WITH IT!"
GOD

RETRO CLASSIC
MONTY PYTHON AND THE HOLY GRAIL



Still, that didn't really give them a huge amount to work with, especially when fate seemed to be conspiring against them. Just before shooting, the National Trust for Scotland informed the production team that they were not going to be allowed to film in any of their locations over concerns that they were not going to treat these historical places with the proper respect. As Gilliam told CBS, they rescinded permission "because we wouldn't respect 'the dignity of the fabric of the building,' where the most horrible tortures, disemboweling had gone on!" Luckily, they still had permission to shoot at Doune Castle, which had to double for several different locations.

Budgetary constraints also meant that Castle Camelot, dismissively described by Arthur's man-servant Patsy as "only a model," was indeed a model – a cutout, in fact. The legendary and hilarious use of coconut shells to make the sound of horses' hooves as the knights prance through the countryside was also partly due to a lack of money. In one of the film's many strokes of genius, the ridiculousness of the coconuts is addressed almost immediately, as a castle guard challenges Arthur in the film's first sequence. "Ridden on a horse?" shouts the 1st Soldier With A Keen Interest In Birds (Palin), "You're using coconuts! You've got two empty halves of coconut and you're bangin' 'em together." The subsequent argument about where these coconuts come from (after all, you can't just expect to find them in Mercia) is one for the ages, and gets an amazing callback later on. Imagining *Monty Python And The Holy Grail* without the coconut halves is just… well, it doesn't bear thinking about.

It wasn't only monetary issues that made shooting the film such a bleak and depressing experience. Shooting in Scotland in April meant that rain was a fact of life, and one with which they were confronted on a daily basis. The wool costumes and cheap chain mail would get wet, it would get cold, and it would stay that way. Once filming wrapped for the day, there would then be a rush back to the hotel, as Cleese approximated that there was enough hot water for about 40 per cent of the team. Meanwhile, Chapman, who was attempting to conceal his alcoholism at the time, suffered awfully when the shoot moved into the countryside and there was nothing to drink. He was unable to walk across the Bridge of Death, and had to be doubled by the assistant cameraman. Arguments would flare up, which were certainly not uncommon for the Pythons, but with time and money being such serious problems, each incident could have proved very costly. Oh, and their only camera broke on the first day.

The shoot even took its toll on the group's most amiable member. Michael Palin, who played more characters than any other cast member in the film (12, if you're wondering), was performing a scene in which he had to play the "Mud-Eater." Describing the day in his diary, Palin wrote,



"Good idea, oh Lord!" "Course it's a good idea!"



Don't worry, the animator will have a fatal heart attack.



Terry Gilliam, Graham Chapman and Terry Jones braving the constant rain.

I DIDN'T VOTE FOR HIM!
5 films that were ruined by Holy Grail

EXCALIBUR (1981)



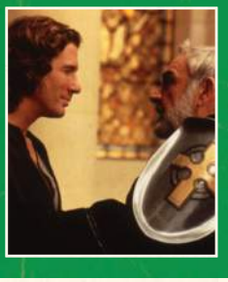
1 Actually, John Boorman's take on the Arthurian legend is pretty good, but it does feature a watery bint lobbing a scimitar at the future King. It's good, but it just doesn't stand up to *Holy Grail*.

LANCELOT DU LAC (1975)



2 Famously released the same year as *Holy Grail*, people were reportedly giggling at this po-faced effort from the great Robert Bresson. Hopefully people have now learned that you don't take on the genius of the Pythons.

FIRST KNIGHT (1995)



3 Even if *Holy Grail* didn't exist, we'd still laugh at this ludicrous, terrible drama featuring a fantastically miscast Richard Gere as Sir Lancelot and Sean Connery as King Arthur. Oh no.

YTHON AND THE HOLY GRAIL



It's hard to argue that this isn't the funniest film ever.

"The day of the Mud-Eater. Clad in rags, crawling through filthy mud repeatedly and doggedly, in a scene which makes the flagellation scene from *Seventh Seal* look like *Breakfast At Tiffany's*." The props master had laid down a patch of chocolate in the mud, which Gilliam reported as being largely made up of pig shit. After several takes, it was unclear to everyone, especially Palin, what was muck and what was not. He lost his temper, which both impressed and amused his co-stars. He reportedly got a round of applause for the way in which his cool was lost.

The end results are fantastic, even if the bulk of Palin's mud-eating doesn't actually appear in the finished film. Gilliam and Jones' endless perfectionism results in a film which stuns in its sheer muckiness. The endless mud and fog create an atmosphere in which, as the directors were so desperate to show, Python-esque jokes about the pointlessness of authority work beautifully. "Must be the king," Eric Idle's corpse-collector tells John Cleese. "Why's that?" "He's not got shit all over him." There's such a sense of gleeful irreverence to the film, from Brother Maynard and the Holy Hand Grenade Of Antioch to the Black Beast of Castle Aaargh (an animated monster who dissipates when the animator suffers a fatal heart attack), all the way to the hilariously abrupt ending, when the modern-day police arrive and arrest Arthur and Bedevere. What else can we say? It's genius.



He might not look like much, but he'll do you up a treat.

Monty Python And The Holy Grail is available to buy on Blu-ray now, distributed by Sony Pictures Home Entertainment.



The Knights Who Say Ni: bizarre, hilarious and picky.



Brother Maynard gets to work on the translation.



Dennis, shortly before being oppressed.



It is a fine shrubbery, indeed. Thanks, Roger



The Black Knight, suffering from a flesh wound

WATCH FIRST



THE SEVENTH SEAL (1957)

There's really nothing like *Holy Grail*, so you should probably just watch a film it parodies/homages.

WATCH NEXT



SOUTH PARK: BIGGER, LONGER AND UNCUT (1999)

It is similarly irreverent, sharp and very silly.

KING ARTHUR (2004)



4 Antoine Fuqua tried to gritty up the legend, bringing the mud and blood but no smiling. It takes itself far too seriously for an Arthurian legend film. It's pretty laughable in places though.

THE KNIGHTS OF THE ROUNDTABLE (2016)



5 We've not seen Guy Ritchie's film yet, but we're willing to bet, or rather we're very much holding out all hope, that we will be reminded of *Holy Grail* and start giggling from start to finish.

YOUR TAKE ON THE CLASSIC

WHAT YOU THOUGHT @SCIFINOW



"Laugh-out-loud and endlessly rewatchable #obviously #helpimbeingrepressed" **@kasterborousdw**



"*Holy Grail* had best ending to a film ever…loved the invisible horses." **@blarny1**



"Most Quotable Movie." **@ak_hannicat**



"One of my favorites. Love everything Monty Python has done." **@mistermedusa**



"Absolute classic. Watched it at least 100 times. A difficult production helped the Pythons make one of the best comedies ever." **@RedShirts3**



"I think it's one of the best comedy films ever made is what I think!" **@SpaceChief75**



"Classic, brilliant, wonderful piece of absurdity. Not for everyone I'm sure but it's a 10/10 for me." **@dalefishmcc**

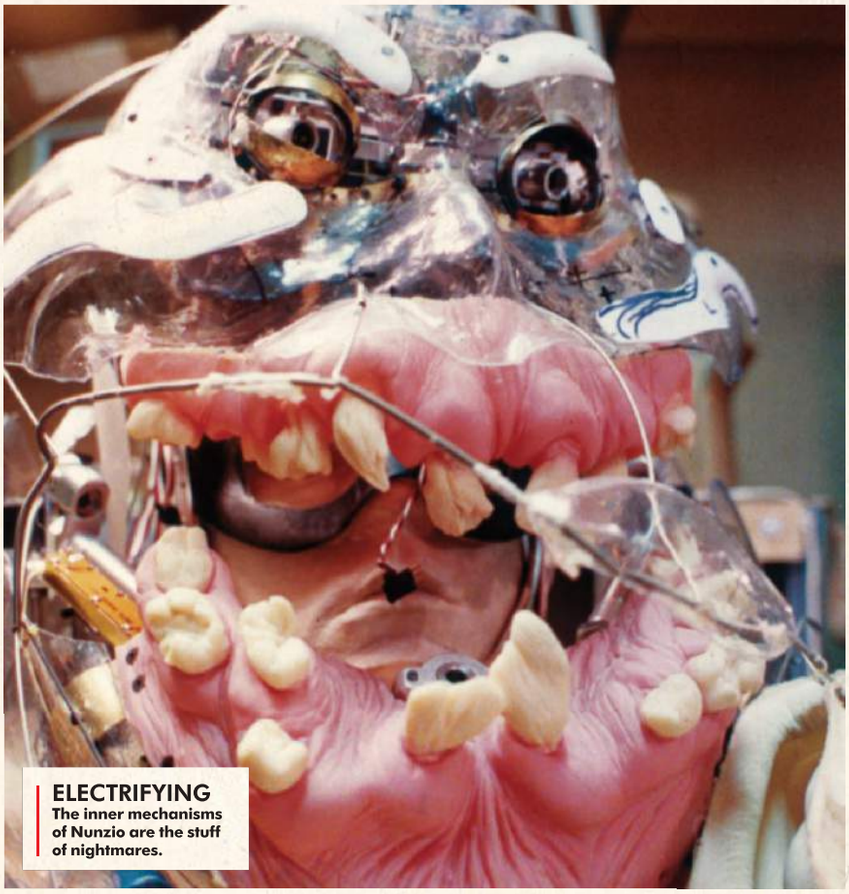
GALLERY

WORDS **POPPY-JAY PALMER**

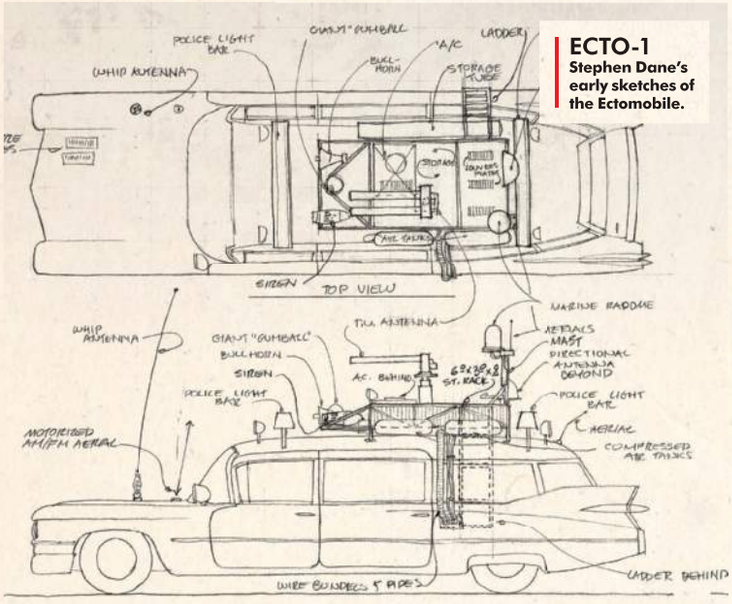
GHOSTBUSTERS
THE ULTIMATE VISUAL HISTORY

Journey deeper into the world of the Ghostbusters with these amazing photos

From the original 1984 film and the 1989 sequel to the graphic novels, videogames and merchandise, the *Ghostbusters* saga has been a staple of the pop culture-loving community for over three decades. Now, Titan Books offers a never-before-seen look at the development of the phenomenon, with photos, concept art and more in *Ghostbusters: The Ultimate Visual History.*



ELECTRIFYING
The inner mechanisms of Nunzio are the stuff of nightmares.



ECTO-1
Stephen Dane's early sketches of the Ectomobile.



PLAY THE GAME
An advertisement for The Real Ghostbusters Fire Station playset.



PAINTING BY NUMBERS
Wilhelm von Homburg becomes a living, three-dimensional personification of Vigo the Carpathian.



IT'S THE SCOLERI BROTHERS!
The final sculpted head of Nunzio Scoleri.

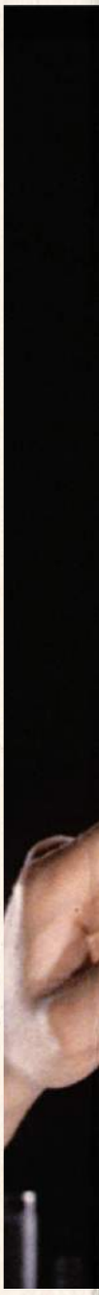
GALLERY
GHOSTBUSTERS



I AM ZUUL
Sigourney Weaver, cinematographer László Kovács and Ivan Reitman take a break during Dana's possession.

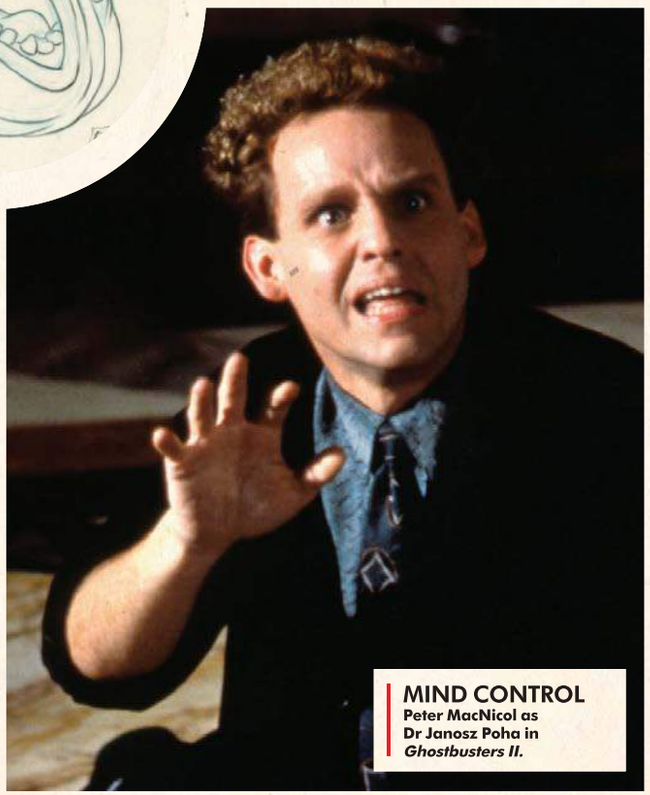


LITTLE SPUD
Thom Enriquez's Slimer illustrations, used for the marketing of *Ghostbusters II*, have become iconic.



GHOSTBUSTERS, VOL 1
A ghost shark plagues Chicago in the graphic novel.



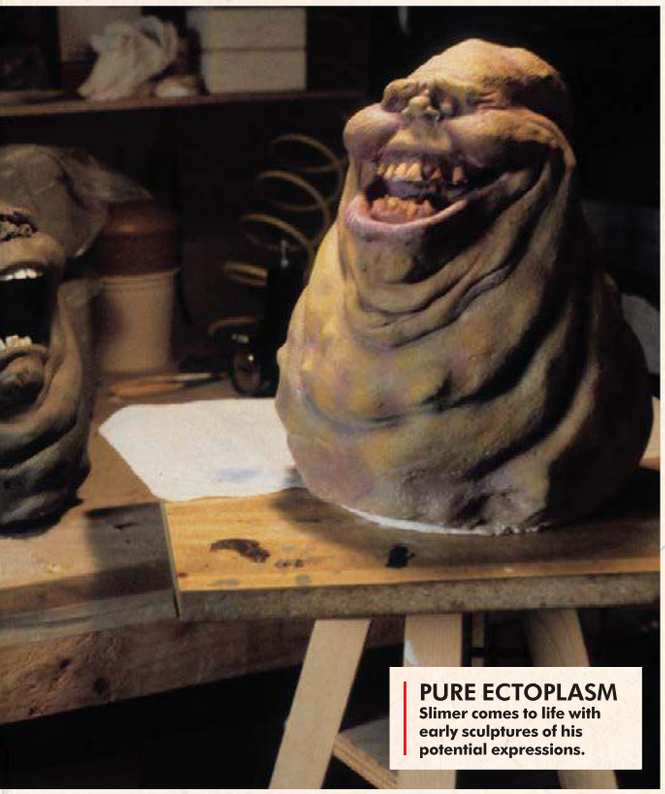


MIND CONTROL
Peter MacNicol as Dr Janosz Poha in *Ghostbusters II*.



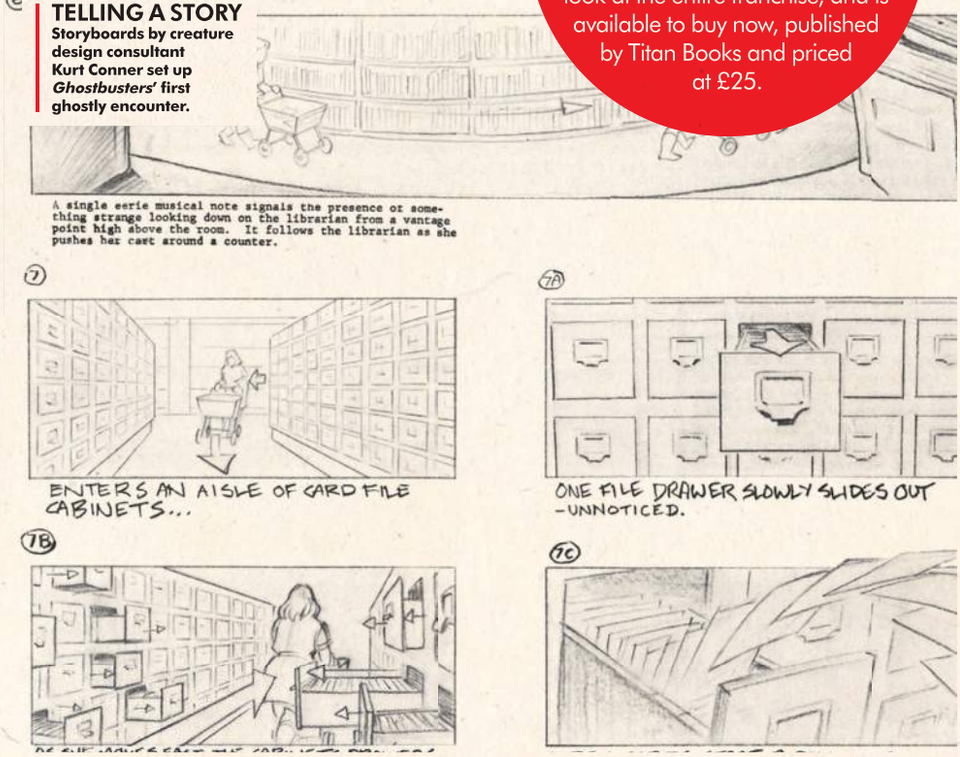
STRINGS ATTACHED
Stuart Ziff and Steve Johnson make the magic happen in the library.



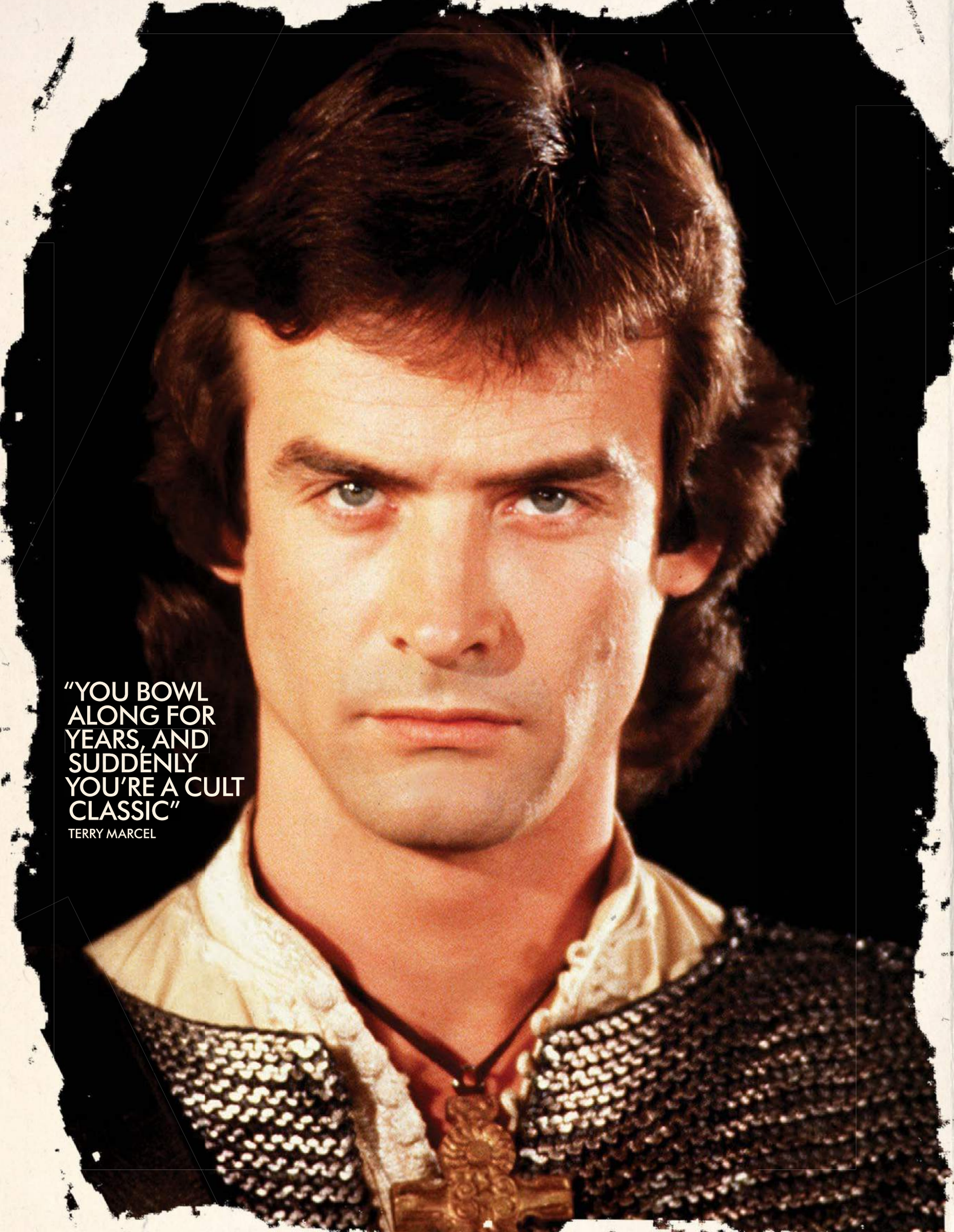


PURE ECTOPLASM
Slimer comes to life with early sculptures of his potential expressions.

TELLING A STORY
Storyboards by creature design consultant Kurt Conner set up *Ghostbusters*' first ghostly encounter.



Ghostbusters: The Ultimate Visual History by Daniel Wallace delves into the world of ghostbusting and takes a comprehensive, behind-the-scenes look at the entire franchise, and is available to buy now, published by Titan Books and priced at £25.



"YOU BOWL ALONG FOR YEARS, AND SUDDENLY YOU'RE A CULT CLASSIC"

TERRY MARCEL

FLASHBACK

HAWK THE SLAYER

TO SOME IT'S A PUNCHLINE IN SPACED; TO OTHERS IT'S AN OVERLOOKED CURIO FROM A BYGONE ERA IN CINEMA HISTORY. WE LOOK BACK WITH DIRECTOR TERRY MARCEL AT SWORD-AND-SORCERY EPIC HAWK THE SLAYER, THE ULTIMATE BATTLE BETWEEN GOOD AND EVIL…

WORDS **STEVE WRIGHT**

Everyone has their own idea of what the phrase 'cult classic' entails. For some it's films that experience a sudden burst in popularity after years of being ignored, and for others it's critically maligned productions that become the recipients of a reappraisal and subsequent critical about turn.

Hawk The Slayer, directed by Terry Marcel – who also co-wrote the screenplay with the late Harry Robertson – falls into neither of these categories. It has its own dedicated fanbase who are fully aware that it's not the greatest film of all time, but love it all the same – a key touchstone of a sub-genre that is in short supply in TV and film nowadays.

However, Marcel tells us that *Hawk* was the bearer of more classical influences. "The whole idea came to me after I'd watched [Akira Kurosawa's] *Yojimbo*, and it had been made into *A Fistful Of Dollars*. I was tinkering about with an idea of doing it again, but with a knight who comes back from the First Crusade to England, this wandering knight with nowhere to go, very much like the character in *Yojimbo* and Clint Eastwood in *A Fistful Of Dollars*."

It was after this that he met Robertson, who up until then had been more renowned for his music than writing, having scored Hammer horror flicks like *The Vampire Lovers*, *Countess Dracula* and *Twins Of Evil*. "Harry had been working with me on two Ray Cooney movies. He was doing the music for them, and on the second one he used to come on set and play the piano for me," recalls Marcel. "We got to know each other very well, and we suddenly found that we had a great interest in sword and sorcery and fantasy. I said, 'Listen, I'm working on this idea for this wandering crusader, I'm going off to Spain to write a 70-page idea.' It wasn't sword and sorcery at that point. I'm writing this script, he's got the sword on his back, and I can't get the sword off his back – how's he going to get it out? Then I suddenly thought, 'I'll put a stone in it and make it a magic stone,' and that's how it was born, just like that. Once you get an idea it goes off at different angles, and once I got this idea in my head, that was that."

And that was indeed that. Working with a budget of just £61,000 – funded by a subsidiary of Lew Grade's ITC Productions, although Marcel eschewed the chance of a bigger budget in order to retain creative control as director – Marcel and the crew made this meagre sum stretch, hiring a host of well-known British character actors to populate the world of *Hawk The Slayer* in minor roles, among them Patricia Quinn (*The Rocky Horror Picture Show*), Roy Kinnear (*Willy Wonka & The Chocolate Factory*), Patrick Magee (*A Clockwork Orange*) and Annette Crosbie (*One Foot In The Grave*). They accompanied the main troupe: 'giant' Gort (Bernard Bresslaw), elf Crow (Ray Charleson), dwarf ⇨



From left to right: Crow, Ranulf, Hawk, Baldin and Gort.



> "NOT ONLY DID WE NOT HAVE THE MONEY; WE DIDN'T HAVE THE TIME"
> TERRY MARCEL

Baldin (Peter O'Farrell) and one-handed archer Ranulf (William Morgan Sheppard).

Leading the cast in the titular role as Hawk was John Terry (who would go on to play Jack's dad in *Lost*). The star of the show, however, was indisputably Jack Palance as his evil brother Voltan. Chewing scenery like there's no tomorrow, he's easily the standout of the ensemble, effortlessly stealing every scene he's in. "Jack Palance was at the top; that's where that performance needed to be," remembers Marcel. "It needed to be big, and he did it."

However, he doesn't reserve his praise solely for the film's big bad. "The dwarf was great; the banter between the dwarf and the giant was fantastic. They were all good actors. I have worked on other things without good actors, but in *Hawk* they all did great. For a director it was an easy job. The innkeeper, Ray Kinnear, turned a few lines into a wonderful performance – just a few lines! That to me is really great acting, when you can take four or five simple lines and steal a scene."

In a film where budget for special effects was in short supply, big performances were vital. Even more pivotal, however, was that it be filmed in ways that disguised the lack of money. Nowhere is this more evident than in the fight scenes: despite the presence of Crow and Ranulf (who wield a bow and crossbow respectively), you rarely actually see an arrow being let loose. Instead, before and after shots are utilised. This may sound like a cheap solution, but somehow in *Hawk* it works.

"We had a man called Paul Beeson, who's one of the old-school cameraman," remembers Marcel. "He was a Pinewood classic, and a lot of those in-camera effects were things you would never see today. There was no CGI or taking it away and doing it: everything you saw was done, apart from scenic artist work, in camera on set. He was brilliant. It was a great crew; the whole thing worked extremely well."

Despite some of the ingenious solutions that were used, inevitably sacrifices had to be made. For instance, the woodland that formed the location for much of the film didn't exactly live up to its name. For a location with the moniker 'The Forest of Weird', it appeared disappointingly ordinary. "The biggest disappointment to me was the Forest of Weird," remembers Marcel. "That's the big one. I really wanted to do much more in that. It was going to be creature driven, and you would have had to do much more animatronics, much more Ray Harryhausen. Not only did we not have the money; we didn't have the time, but the Forest of Weird should have been much scarier, and had much more going on, we just didn't have it. There was no time or money."

Inevitably as well for a film containing an elf and a dwarf, comparisons can easily be made between *Hawk* and a certain JRR Tolkien-penned fantasy world. While acknowledging the shadow it casts over the genre, Marcel says his inspirations for *Hawk* – particularly the elves – came from a different source. "As far as I was concerned, these elves were the last of their kind. Of course I'd read [*The Lord Of The Rings*], and you get influenced by it, but it was a case of bringing the band back together really. Of course, as with all sword and sorcery, Fritz Leiber said it right when he said that sword and sorcery is a wizard, a warrior and a women. We didn't have a woman – she got killed at the beginning."



In the event, the reception afforded to *Hawk The Slayer* was a lukewarm one, not helped by the collapse of ITC before it could be released in the US. Subsequent plans for a sequel were put on the backburner, although there were attempts to resurrect the series, including one such proposal that would have seen Tom Hardy take on the title role ("We had him. I went to a fairly well-known distributor, and they looked at me and said, 'Tom Hardy's never going to make it'" recalls Marcel).

However, *Hawk* is far from dead. In recent years it has increasingly gained a dedicated fan following through word of mouth and celebrity admirers, such as Simon Pegg, Bill Bailey and Rick Wakeman. It's a regular fixture on the Horror Channel, and is still purchased regularly overseas, with Andrew Grocock of Westwood Productions – who is co-producing the planned sequel, *Hawk The Hunter* – telling us that it is still big in territories like Germany, Japan, Colombia



Ferdy Mayne was one of many top actors to lend his skills to *Hawk*.



John Terry, who played Hawk, later went on to star in *Lost*.



Hopefully, the time is drawing close when Hawk will live on again.

and Mexico. Coupled with the recent Blu-ray re-release, which has since sold out in retailer Zavvi, and it is clear that there is still an appetite for *Hawk The Slayer*.

For Marcel, its revival definitely provides food for thought. "You bowl along for 35 years, do other things, and *Hawk* goes along, sometimes it gets a two-star rating, sometimes it gets a one, and suddenly, it says 'cult classic'. When did I become a cult classic? Is it just a build up? It's like when Rick Wakeman said, 'Did they call me a cult, or something else?'"

Grocock adds, "You make it, and the generation in which it was made watch it and go away, and then their kids discover it, and they start to like it. Because it's got two generations of fandom, it becomes a cult, you've got an older and a younger generation, it becomes a cult, because the younger generation discover it, and the older generation say, 'That was ours', and that's what happened to *Hawk*."

And if they have their way, their story will live on. Currently, plans are afoot to finally release sequel *Hawk The Hunter* once and for all. Marcel has updated the script, and this time has RPG publishers Rebellion on board as producers, with a TV series to follow on from the film. In order to aid this, a Kickstarter campaign has been launched. By the time this issue is out, we should have a good idea of the likelihood of it achieving its desired aim.

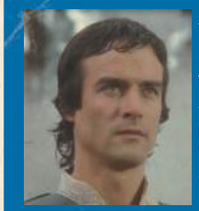
More than anything else, *Hawk The Hunter* will give Marcel and co the chance to achieve what they couldn't quite manage before. "When we wrote that sequel, we were writing things in it that couldn't be done. I don't know what the hell we thought we were going to do, but it's only now that we can do what we were going to do. Now, because of the abilities to use the CGI, we can now do the things we wrote, whereas I don't know how we were going to do it then! A lot of it was 'We'll worry about it when we're there!'"



Hawk The Slayer is available to buy on Blu-ray now, distributed by Network.

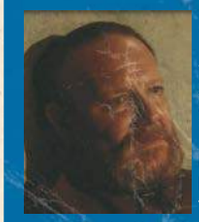
WHAT THEY DID NEXT

THE FURTHER ADVENTURES OF HAWK'S GANG



1 John Terry (Hawk)

The film's lead made a number of high-profile appearances post-*Hawk*, most notably in Stanley Kubrick's *Full Metal Jacket* and James Bond film *The Living Daylights*. After popping up in Lovecraft adaptation *The Resurrected*, he later made a successful move into TV, guest-starring in *ER* and *24*, before taking on a prominent recurring role as Christian Shephard in *Lost*.



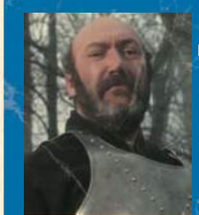
2 William Morgan Sheppard (Ranulf)

Sheppard's roles since *Hawk The Slayer* have been frequent but brief, generally appearing as background characters. His many TV credits include one-episode cameos in the likes of *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, *Voyager*, *Charmed*, *Alias* and *Doctor Who*, and in films like *The Elephant Man*, *The Prestige* and *Transformers*.



3 Ray Charleson (Crow)

After working with Marcel again in 1983's *Prisoners Of The Lost Universe*, Charleson's work has been less high-profile, with the exception of roles in Steven Spielberg's *Empire Of The Sun*, Ronald Neame's Hopscotch and Paul Greengrass's *United 93*. In terms of genre output, he can be seen in 1990 sci-fi-er *Fatal Sky*, as well as an episode of *The Young Indiana Jones Chronicles*.



4 Bernard Bresslaw (Gort)

Having previously starred in Terry Gilliam's *Jabberwocky*, *Carry On* regular Bresslaw went on to memorably appear in the Peter Yates-directed *Hawk*-alike *Krull* as the Cyclops. He later turned to stage acting, performing for the Royal Shakespeare Company and the National Theatre. Tragically, he died in 1993 from a heart attack.



5 Peter O'Farrell (Baldin)

Another fantasy devotee, O'Farrell also teamed up with Marcel again in *Prisoners Of The Lost Universe* and TV series *Dark Knight*. His appearances since then haven't been as frequent as his *Hawk* contemporaries, although you can catch him in Ridley Scott's *Legend* as Pox and as a Daily Prophet journalist in *Harry Potter And The Chamber Of Secrets*.

THE SCIFINOW BABYLON 5 QUIZ

HAVE YOU LIVED A FULL LIFE AND EXPLORED THE GALAXY, OR HAVE YOU BEEN CONFINED TO THE WALLS OF BABYLON 5? SEE HOW FAR YOU GO WITH OUR QUIZ...

PEOPLE PERSON

1. Where was Delenn born?
2. Who replaced Commander Jeffrey Sinclair as the military governor of the station in Season Two?
3. What species was Kosh Naranek?
4. What was the title of the book written by G'Kar?
5. Who was Earth's Centauri ambassador in 2243?

TRIVIA APLENTY

6. At which school did Jeffrey Sinclair serve as a flight instructor?
7. Which five dominant species were represented at the start of the series?
8. Which *Grease* alum starred as series regular Zack Allan from Season Two onwards?
9. What did Mr Morden and the Shadows give to Londo to gain his trust?
10. What was the Valerius?

THE SPACE STATION

11. Whereabouts was the Babylon 5 space station located?
12. How many miles long was Babylon 5?
13. Who was the Chief of Security on board the space station?
14. Which six colour-coded sections was the space station divided into?
15. Which sector is Downbelow located in?

REAL LIFE

16. In what time was the show's first season set?
17. When was Babylon 5 station decommissioned?
18. When did the series' first episode air in the US?
19. And when did the series' last episode air in the US?
20. Who created the show?

DIDN'T HE/SHE DO WELL! See how you did with our arbitrary scoring system



16-20

TALIA WINTERS

Are you a telepath? That's the only explanation. You've gone and aced this quiz. Well done to you. But seriously, are you a telepath? Does telepathy count as cheating? We'll let it slide this time. Don't do it again.

11-15

SUSAN IVANOVA

Get you with your excellent quizzing skills! Give yourself a pat on the back. You're not in charge, but you might as well be. Keep burying yourself in your work. Who needs friends anyway?

6-10

MICHAEL GARIBALDI

You're most comfortable when wise-cracking, but your brand of wit doesn't help in a quiz situation. Also, your introspection and crippling self-doubt. They're no help either.

0-5

KOSH NARANEK

Your species has been known to be uninterested in the affairs of others, which is blatant from your appalling score. We bet you got question three right though, didn't you? Jeez, it's always about you.

ANSWERS: **1.** THE SOUTHERN REGIONS OF MINBAR **2.** CAPTAIN JOHN SHERIDAN **3.** VORLON **4.** BOOK OF G'KAR **5.** LONDO MOLLARI **6.** EARTHFORCE ACADEMY **7.** HUMANS, MINBARI, NARN, CENTAURI AND VORLONS **8.** JEFF CONAWAY **9.** EYE OF THE FIRST EMPEROR **10.** A PRIMUS CLASS BATTLE CRUISER BELONGING TO THE CENTAURI REPUBLIC **11.** IN THE EPSILON ERIDANI STAR SYSTEM **12.** FIVE **13.** MICHAEL GARIBALDI **14.** BLUE, RED, GREEN, BROWN, GREY AND YELLOW **15.** BROWN SECTOR **16.** YEAR 2258 **17.** YEAR 2281 **18.** 26 JANUARY 1994 **19.** 25 NOVEMBER 1998 **20.** J MICHAEL STRACZYNSKI

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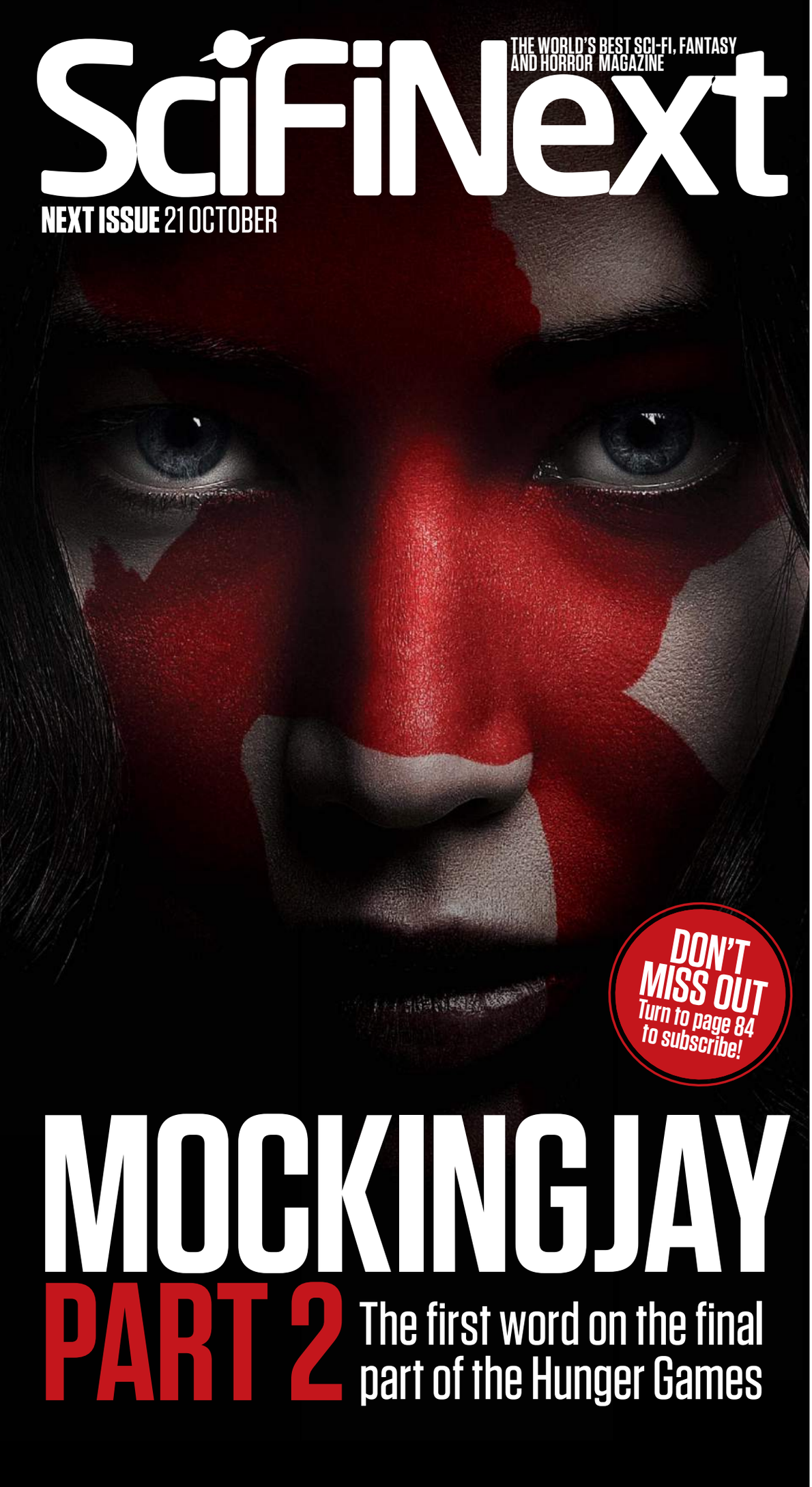
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The first word on the final part of the Hunger Games

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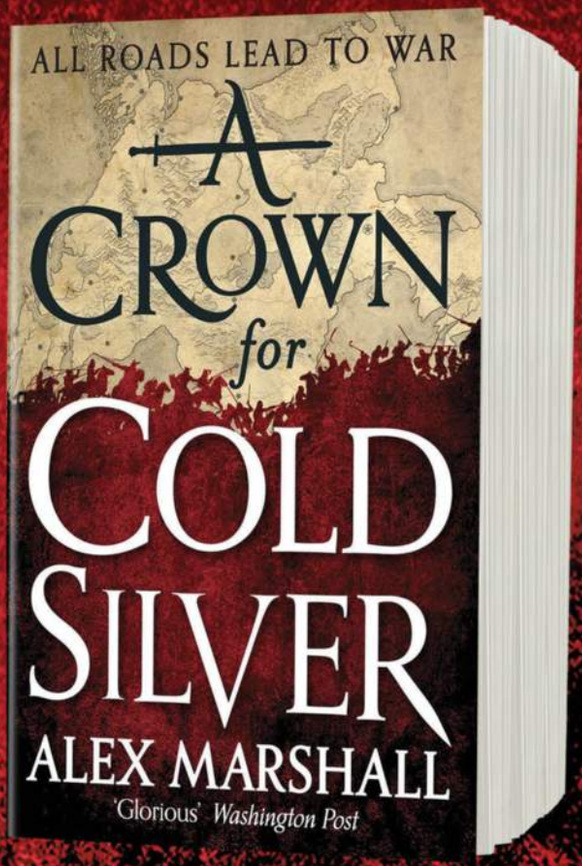
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